

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION IS RESERVED.]

[REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD.]

No. 770—VOL. XXX.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 2, 1878.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE PASSING OF THE SHADOW.]

SNOWFLAKES' SHADOW, SUNBEAMS' SHINE.

A CHRISTMAS STORY OF TWO WORLDS.

CHAPTER XIII.

Now conscience wakes despair,
That slumber'd, wakes the bitter memory
Of what he was, what is, and what must be.
MILTON.

THE gallant charge of the sailors resulted in an entire defeat of the Maories, the leader of whom, Ngaranga, was severely wounded in the battle, although by dint of great exertions his warriors succeeded in averting his capture and bore him from the field.

In a brief council of war held by Col. Chadwick and his small staff, at which Horace and Percy were permitted to be present, considerable difference of opinion existed as to the advisability of pushing forward to the siege of the fortress of Rua-peka-peka.

Notwithstanding a somewhat severe wound, one arm being fractured, the commandant was in favour of following up his success.

Disregarding opposition from his subordinates, Col. Chadwick solicited the opinion of the two fugitives.

Horace Mowbray, whose injuries were only superficial, strongly advised the old officer to carry on the war with vigour. His present pain and his late captivity had embittered the soldier's mind towards the natives.

Percy kept silent for some time when he was in turn appealed to. His feelings with regard

to the Maories were modified by gratitude to the girl whose self-sacrifice had saved him. But it was apparent that the longer the continuance of this war might be the more her countrymen must eventually suffer, and Percy at last determined to guide the British force speedily and surely to the pah of the "Bats' Nest," on condition that he should remain a non-combatant.

The siege and surrender of that stronghold are matters of history. Suffice it to say that courageous action proved the best policy, for the rebel fort was gained with but a small effusion of blood and a stable peace secured.

Col. Chadwick proved as grateful as he had promised to be and his strong recommendations were despatched by the first mail, soliciting a free pardon for the convict Percy Mowbray in consideration of the good offices he had rendered to his country.

Horace's term of service would in the natural order of things have terminated in the following August, and it was agreed that if the application for Percy's freedom were successful they should both seek their native land in company.

"No, my boy," said the soldier, in reply to a request of the young man, "I will send no word of myself nor permit you to do so. Write to Dora if you please. Tell her of the honour you have gained—the pardon which you expect—the happy meeting to which you look forward; but say nothing of me. I have much to think over and to plan before I look on my wife's face once more, and I would not have her learn aught of me. Besides, it would not be well that such disturbing intelligence should reach a house over which the heavy cloud of first mourning for a loved one

hangs heavily, for they will hear of Ducie's death by this next mail."

Percy observed this injunction implicitly. He wrote, however, to Dora, telling her of his own brightened prospects and alluding feelingly to her father's death.

There could be no strain of exultation in the letter, for from what the young man had seen of Major Ducie he knew well that he would be long and tenderly lamented by the daughter whose name hung on his dying lips. Of this last touching fact indeed Percy made mention, saying he had learnt it from an eye-witness of the major's fate.

Thus we will leave them for the present.—Horace steadily fulfilling his duties, and Percy, who, pending the decision of the authorities, was kept under a very mild surveillance, employed as a clerk, in which capacity he won golden opinions from all with whom he came into contact.

The old globe whirled round at its wonted rapid pace, the days and nights told up again their allotted tale, to mark a closing year, and the day preceding Christmas had come once more.

It had brought many changes to English hearts and homes.

Amongst those with whose fates we have to do Mrs. Ducie, moving about nervelessly in her widow's weeds, seemed greatly altered.

Since the night of Percy's arrest as a thief and midnight burglar a slow but certain shadow had fallen on her, which the news of her husband's death intensified greatly.

Few could have recognised in the pale, list-

less, sad-faced woman to whom all occupation seemed irksome, all places and persons alike without interest, the ease-loving, self-indulgent votary of fashion of old days.

In these melancholy times Dora formed her mother's sole support.

The gentle girl devoted herself to her parent with unremitting care, untiring love, and in return therefor what little interest Mrs. Ducie could yet feel in earthly things centred in the devoted daughter.

Deep and lasting as was Dora's grief for her dead father, great as was her pity for the remaining parent who could be scarcely said to live, youth and certain ties preserved her from despondency.

There was first her interest in the brother so far away.

Her letters to him were many, and her happy tears flowed often over Percy's hopeful replies.

The desire to welcome him home free and praised of men was the one bright beacon of expectancy which shone across the sad, slow weeks.

Then again the girl had greatly interested herself in the fortunes of Ronald and Rose and had succeeded in interesting others also.

The result of her efforts had been that Ronald, disregarding some subtle temptations which his father had thrown in his way, was now a successful and prosperous artist, and Rose had for months been domiciled at the Ducie mansion as a companion to Dora.

It had been settled also that their marriage was to take place in the spring, when Dora might put off the outward sign of mourning for her father, whose death would still be lamented in her inmost heart, and don the bright apparel of the bridesmaid.

But that was not to be.

For one character in the strange drama which formed so great a part in the lives of Mrs. Ducie and her daughter has to be accounted for, and he was an agent whose power for good or ill was not yet destroyed.

The day was a grim and cheerless one. No fleecy December snow filled the air and lay softly in the streets, no clear blue sky and sharp, keen air braced alike mind and body, but instead a continuous downpour of heavy rain, a black pall of leaden clouds overhead, a miserable morass of thick mud on footpaths and road-way alike, combined to make the closing in of Christmas even for London exceptionally dismal.

If this might be said of the aspect of the metropolis generally it was truly true of Pinniger Street, Westminster.

Who Pinniger had been none knew, but the little, dirty, malodorous thoroughfare to which he had bequeathed his name was of considerable antiquity.

Unfortunately, however, its reputation was not as venerable as its age, for even Tiger Bay or Field Lane was respectable compared with the swarming nests of thieves, outcasts, and double-dyed ruffians who tenanted the low lodging-houses which formed the entire street, with the exception of a public-house, between whose battered, greasy, ever-swinging doors no respectable person was known to enter.

In one of the most squalid of these refuges of habitual law-breakers a man was seated by the handful of fire which smouldered in a stove minus of all save the lower bar.

The room was cold and cheerless but pervaded by the pleasant odour of a first-rate Havana cigar, which contrasted strangely with the poverty-stricken surroundings.

The man from whose lips the light spirals of smoke ascended was dressed in clothes of fashionable cut but torn and mud-stained, and his helpless, hopeless attitude indicated either illness or heavy mental depression.

As this individual turned his looks from the glimmering embers to the sombre sky, visible through the few remaining dirty panes of the window, most of which had been replaced by soiled brown paper or even rags thrust into the vacant spaces, he showed the face of Gaston Mowbray.

But how changed. No longer the astute, daring visage of the successful forger, nor that of the prosperous swindler and man about town.

No, those thin, pinched features, that haggard countenance, with its sunken cheeks and hollow, wide-staring eyes looked rather the index of a mind haunted by a great guilty fear or the face of a hunted man who even in the most remote refuge-lair can hope for no relief from fast-following pursuit.

"Here's a pretty pass to come to!" he said, in audible soliloquy. "This wretched hovel my only shelter—that treacherous harrikin my only protector—my money relinquished in that speedy flight—my few valuables sold or bartered to silence these harpies—scarce food to eat"—and he dashed the unfinished cigar-end into the fire—"and no drink—the refuge from horrible thoughts, the only true waters of oblivion—no drink to be obtained!"

A cautious tap accompanied by a low whistle at this juncture was heard at the door.

Gaston rose and opened it.

"Someone next door wants to see you very special," came from the ill-visaged, beetle-browed, coarsely dressed Grinkle, grown older in iniquity and therefore more repulsive than when we saw him last.

"See me? Do you suppose I am going out?"

"Yer needn't. Old Boss will show yer a trap-door leadin' through. It's an old woman—dyin' she is—who has heard o' yer and says she can't die till she's seen yer. Her name's Nancy Logan."

Gaston drew back with astonishment.

"I thought she died long since."

"Well, she didn't then, and she wants to see yer."

Without further words Grinkle slunk from the room.

After a few moments' hesitation Gaston sought the landlady and, guided by her, went upstairs and through a concealed door in the upper story which led into the garret of the next house, a tiny den likewise.

On the pale bed, which was in truth little more than a heap of rags, lay the shrivelled, emaciated form of a woman.

A strange spectacle she presented there in the feeble light.

Her little, shrivelled, waxen face seemed that of a small species of monkey—her frame so attenuated that it seemed almost impossible that life could linger in a form so shrunken. Yet Gaston Mowbray could remember the woman when her face was fair, when her eyes were bright, her waist supple, her foot elastic.

With the parting injunction to "the captain" to press the spring on the right side of the trap when he wished to open it Old Boss withdrew.

As Gaston, not without a shudder of disgust, stooped over to look more closely at the dying woman, whose only sign of life just then was her labouring breathing, Nancy opened her eyes with a strange light in them—the expiring flash of a taper soon to sink into the darkness of dissolution.

"You have come, Gaston Mowbray," she said, in a voice thin and weak but piercingly clear. "That is well. I need not ask if you remember me."

"I do, Nancy."

"Call me not by that name," said the old woman, with a piteous cry. "Nevermore, nevermore! You see me here dying, Gaston, a poor old, forsaken woman, old before my time—for I have not your years. By a mere chance my dull ears caught your name and I learned that you were concealed in the next house—a fugitive—an outlaw—a murderer! Is it true?"

"I am a fugitive—what else you please."

"That is naught to me. If I could save you by lifting a finger, Gaston, I would not raise it. But let that pass," the old woman continued, with difficulty. "I have something of more moment to tell. Raise me up."

With a look of repulsion Gaston lifted the emaciated form to a sitting posture.

"I can just see, Gaston, that you too are old—old and broken-looking, as if a fiend hunted you—he! he! I will help you to happier fancies. Perhaps when you dream of your crimes you would be glad to have a pleasant memory. I will give you one—be! he!"

The laugh thrilled through the bare chamber like the eldritch wail of a mocking banshee.

"You had your vengeance on Charlotte Ducie—eh, Gaston?"

He nodded shortly.

"Now listen. When your wife, my sister, died—died, poor girl, by your ill-usage—you may remember that I kept your house and took charge of your helpless child?"

"Yes."

"When too you brought the other infant, the child of Charlotte Ducie—ah! and of your dead brother—I tended it also, showed equal kindness to each?"

"Very likely," said Gaston, indifferently.

"You remember how strong was the likeness between the boys—your strict directions as to difference of attire to mark them from each other?"

Gaston's look took some interest as he responded:

"I do."

"There was however a distinctive mark. Under the curly hair of little Ronald above the left ear there was a small mole, but the boys—about one age—could have passed as twins."

A spasm passed over the woman's face and she gasped for breath fitfully.

"I must be speedy," she resumed. "When I found that cruelty and menace were the sole reward for the service I was rendering you for the sake of my done-to-death sister—when I discovered your hatred of Charlotte Ducie and your villainous intentions regarding her son—the fiend took possession of me also and I resolved that the ill you meditated should fall upon your own child. On the last night when you struck me in your brutal passion I carried out my design while you slept off the stupor of inebriety. Next morning we quarrelled and you thrust me forth into the cruel world—to die for aught you cared. But I've had my revenge and basked yours—he! he! he!"

Gaston grasped the woman's arm savagely as he cried:

"Malediction! What do you mean?"

"I changed the necklaces, the clothes—everything of the children. Gaston Mowbray, the youth you brought up to crime, the boy you injured to vice, he who toils as a convict far away, is Ronald Gaston, your own son—he! he! he!"

The strange laugh rang out shrilly. Then came another spasm, a strong convulsion passed over the shrunken face, her head fell forward, and Nancy Logan was a corpse!

With the yell of a despairing fiend Gaston Mowbray smote his forehead with his clenched hand.

"Can it be true? My life-vengeance an idiot's sport—my victim mine own son?"

As he stepped to the trap it opened suddenly, and old Boss's face appeared at the aperture.

"Quick! Out the other way, captain! Inspector Clitheroe is below! He's after you! Quick!"

The avenger of blood was indeed on Gaston Mowbray's track!

CHAPTER XIV.

All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings. SHAKESPEARE.

At about the same time that Gaston Mowbray held his interview with the dying woman a strange scene of life's drama was being enacted at the home of the Ducies.

Percy had by letter informed Dora that he expected to join her by the New Year, but in consequence of an unusually expeditious passage of the vessel which conveyed Horace and himself the young man was able to appear at his mother's house on the afternoon of the day preceding Christmas.

He was received with a delighted welcome by

the happy girl, whose thoughts had so often reverted to him when far away, and who found the young man even surpassed the high ideal she had formed of him.

"Dearest Dora," he had said, with a tender caress, "whatever good fortune has been mine, whatever of better life I have lived, I owe to you. I have kept my word. When temptation arose, when evil thoughts assailed me, this was my inspirer."

He drew from his bosom the tress of Dora's hair which she had given him at parting, enshrined in a costly locket—a present from the family of a boy whose life he had saved in New Zealand.

The little trinket held also the lock of poor Koe-Koe's crisp black hair, and Dora's tears fell fast while Percy related the death of the ill-fated Maori girl.

Mrs. Ducie received the young man with a more affectionate welcome than he had anticipated.

Percy brought with him a dark, soldierly looking man whose face bore numerous scars and whose right eye was covered by a black shade.

The young man introduced his friend as a comrade of Major Ducie and one who had received his last wishes.

These the stranger promised to impart after reference to a certain sealed packet which he described as among the deceased officer's papers.

By Mrs. Ducie's orders the soldier was shown into the private room of the major, Dora accompanying him.

The packet was discovered in a secret drawer of an ancient bureau which served as a receptacle for odds and ends, and the stranger craved permission to read its contents in solitude, promising shortly to join the small family circle, when he would tell the story of their loved one's fate.

Somewhat surprised at the intimate knowledge of her late husband's papers shown by the stranger, Mrs. Ducie yet considered that very knowledge sanctioned the permission required, and Percy's friend was left to the solitary perusal of what documents the packet might contain.

Some time elapsed before he joined the little family circle. Mrs. Ducie, Dora and Percy sat around the fire in a cosy, pleasant parlour conversing in low tones, for the widow and Dora felt that the strange man who sat silent in the chamber above them was in some sort a messenger from the husband and father now in spirit land, and that his speech must re-open a grave and uneasy afresh the fountain of tears.

The deepening twilight gloomed through the room ere the visitor descended, yet its sombre shadow seemed so well adapted to the sad topic which rested in the hearts of its tenants that Miss Ducie forbore to ring for lights, nor when at last the stranger joined them did she do so.

He took the armchair by the hearth and beside Mrs. Ducie which was placed for him, and, though only the flickering flames of the genial fire illumined the little circle of faces, the dark-visaged stranger half shadowed his countenance even from that sparse glow.

"I have performed the duty which Major Ducie laid upon me in examining certain papers," he began, after a long interval of silence, "and of those I will speak to you, madame, by-and-bye. Is it your desire now and the wish of this young lady that I should speak of my interview with your husband?"

Both faintly gave their assent.

"In the long, far-off years, madame," the soldier went on, "I knew your husband well, ere even you did. We were dear friends in days before Horace Mowbray made you his bride."

At the name Mrs. Ducie gave a little cry and shivered violently.

"At our last meeting Ducie and I parted in bitter anger. I never thought to see his face again—nor desired it. When next we met it was under the stars of a Southern sky and on a battle-field.

"When I knelt over a wounded country-

man whose weakened voice caught my ear I found mine ancient friend once more. At such a time hard is the heart where animosity lingers. I give Heaven thanks that mine was then softened. Three objects held the noble spirit that was passing to a better land; one was love and anxiety for the wife so far away—another was tender thought for the darling daughter whose name was last upon his lips—the last and the other one, pressed on me with the fervour of quickly passing breath, was that I should swear to undertake the perusal of the papers I have but now examined, and—" He paused and added, solemnly—"that I should vow to be in his place the guardian of the beloved child—that I should be in his place the life partner of the wife he should see no more!"

Mrs. Ducie's loud sobs were checked by an indignant cry as she sprang to her feet.

"How dare you, sir?" she exclaimed, in an injured tone.

"That I should be a father to her son," went on the stranger, in an unmoved tone. "I could not promise all, but I resolved that if these papers proved to me what he said they would do I would re-assume my name and place in the world of living men, and that if it were possible to fulfil the legacies of trust he demanded it should be done by—"

He paused abruptly.

A strange change had come upon the stranger's voice at the last sentences. Mrs. Ducie detected the altered tone and her agitation became terrible.

She advanced a step and, laying her hand on the stranger's arm said, in a fearful and piteous voice:

"By whom, sir? For the love of Heaven! by whom?"

"By one come back from the dead, Charlotte Ducie! By Horace Mowbray!"

As the man spoke he drew his hand across his face and turned towards the agitated woman. The patch over the eye, the deep scars of the countenance, had gone, and she recognised, in that changed, grey, yet hopeful and tender face the countenance of him who had led her a happy girl-bride to the altar.

With a wan face, closed eyes, and pallid lips, Mrs. Ducie staggered back and fell into Percy's extended arms.

The Christmas Day looked on a happy and already united family in the Ducie mansion, if we may still so call it.

The passionate protestations of the husband returned from the tomb, urged at their secret interviews, had strangely wrought on Mrs. Ducie, and it was palpable to the keen, affectionate eyes of Dora that her mother's sorrow would turn in process of time to happy sunshine, as surely as grim winter changes to blossoming spring.

Nor was the thought distasteful to her.

Already she felt drawn towards this sad-faced wanderer to whose charge her father had confided her.

And, besides, did he not look the very counterpart of the adored brother, save that youth glowed in the one and age and care had deeply traced their tracks in the other?

The day passed on in a kind of staid content—not happiness but the material from which happiness is made.

With a desire for solitude and her own thoughts Mrs. Ducie had during the afternoon sought the quiet of the conservatory where Percy had found his sister two winters previously.

Suddenly Mrs. Ducie became aware that an unsteady or unaccustomed hand was endeavouring to open the door of the conservatory which led to the garden.

As she raised her eyes the person succeeded in unfastening the door and entered.

Mrs. Ducie gave a faint shriek at an apparition so unexpected.

"Gaston!" she cried.

It was indeed Gaston Mowbray, though more resembling a spectre than a living man. His face was haggard and pale as ashes, but streaked

with blood, and great purple bruises covered his brow.

His eyes were swollen and heavy, his pallid lips retreated, showing the white teeth gleaming like those of a savage beast. He was hatless and his clothing torn, mud-splashed, and marked with dark-red stains.

As Mrs. Ducie strove to give utterance to a cry for help Gaston fell at her feet and clasped his hands imploringly.

"Charlotte, by all you love on earth, by your hope of Heaven, do not alarm the house. I have that to say which it imports you much to know and but scant time to impart it, for I am a dying man. Be silent and self-controlled and listen to me."

Could this be her proud, remorseless foe—this crushed, despairing man who crouched at her feet?

A sentiment akin to pity stole to Mrs. Ducie's heart. Yes, she would humour him by listening to his words, even though he could tell her naught of moment. Was it not rather she who could give him startling tidings?

"Mr. Mowbray," she said. "I am willing to hear what you have to say. But stay," she added, noting more closely Gaston's forlorn appearance, "you look ill—you are wounded. Come into the house and first obtain rest and refreshment. You have been my bitter foe, but this is a day on which all enmities should be forgiven and forgotten."

"Thank you, Charlotte," responded Gaston, rising unsteadily to his feet and sinking into a seat. There is no time to be lost. Listen. I am a fugitive—a criminal hunted from one refuge to another by the brother of a man who met his death at my hand. A short hour ago my pursuers came upon me and surrounded me. I cared not for escape had it not been for the news I had to tell you and that I would not die on a scaffold exposed to the gibes of a jeering crowd. I fought like a madman—but for freedom only. Once I could have plunged my stiletto into the heart of the leader of those who had hunted me down; but I forbore—I would have no more blood upon my head, and it was his right and duty to act the part he had done."

Mrs. Ducie's face blanched afresh at the wild words.

"Have no fear, Charlotte. I have succeeded in throwing them off the track for a time—I want but a short space. But to proceed. It is to-day two years since I wrung your heart by the accomplishment of a long-cherished vengeance which I deemed my duty. Think not I absolve you, Charlotte. No. You were then truly the cold, heartless woman I called you. Your face looks soft and kindly to-day though and recalls a time long past. Perhaps bitter trial has purified your nature. Well for you if it is so. During the past two years of my consummated revenge I have not repented of it—nor do I now. Yet is it not strange that I should come to you hungering and thirsting for news you alone can give—yet with a power to award you a rich return for every word you speak?"

Mrs. Ducie bent her head in assent.

"Tell me then, Charlotte"—and he bent forward and fixed his woeful eyes on Mrs. Ducie's face—"have you heard aught of Percy Mowbray? Does he live?"

"Yes."

"By what means have you learned this?"

Mrs. Ducie looked at him doubtfully. Was this some carefully concealed plot for further revenge.

"He has written to my daughter," she said, hesitatingly.

"To Dora! Then you have not cast him off? You recognise him, and when he returns from his term of torture you will receive and cherish him?"

"Assuredly."

"Promise me, Charlotte—swear it by the Heaven above that, whatever I may this day speak, you will still do this by him, that you will make amends for the wrong I have wrought?"

"It needs no promise from a mother."

"Take the pledge nevertheless, Charlotte!"

Gaston cried, imploringly. "In pity for a doomed man—a lost soul—swear this!"

"He is mad!" Mrs. Ducie said to herself. "His ill life and deeds have turned his brain." Then she said aloud, in a fervent tone:

"I swear it, Gaston!"

An exultant expression crossed the man's haggard countenance, followed immediately by a short but terrible spasm of agonised pain.

"The end is near!" he muttered. "Give your entire attention, Charlotte, to my next words."

In brief, broken sentences, often stopped by increasing paroxysms of anguish, which caused his face to contract and his strong frame to writhe uncontrollably, Gaston Mowbray told Mrs. Ducie the startling tale which he had heard the previous evening of Nancy Logan.

An irresistible conviction of the truth of the strange story seized Mrs. Ducie.

She rose to her feet in an agitation which she could not master as he concluded.

"It is true. My infant had the mark of which you speak, Gaston. Merciful Heaven! how marvellous are the workings of fate! Ronald is then my son! This explains the strange sympathy that has drawn me to him since Dora first brought him!"

As she spoke Gaston with a loud groan fell from his chair on the marble pavement and stretched his hand towards Mrs. Ducie with an imploring gesture.

At that moment a succession of imperative knocks was audible from the outer door of the mansion and some dark forms were dimly seen climbing over the walls which bounded the extensive garden.

A glance of exultant scorn flashed over Gaston's distorted face.

"They come!" he muttered, "but too late! Their prey has escaped them! Baffled—ha! ha!"

He laughed with a strange, wild, choking sound.

Mrs. Ducie, struck by a new fear, screamed loudly and hurrying feet were heard approaching in response.

"Charlotte!" gasped Gaston, "they come, but the hour has also come which seals the work of the poison I took as I came in. Hear me! You will—protect my son—because I have at last repented and given my—my life to bear—you this news as—as some amends. You will one day—tell him—that his father died in hope of his—his forgiveness. Promise, Charlotte!"

Her face bathed in tears, Mrs. Ducie knelt by the dying man.

"It does not need, Gaston," she said, in broken accents, as she caught sight of Percy and Horace rushing into the conservatory, "for he is here to bestow his own forgiveness. Percy!" she cried, in a thrilling voice, "there has been an error but now set right. This expiring man is your father, Gaston Mowbray, who prays your merciful forgiveness for the wrong he has done you all unwittingly. Quick!"

As she spoke Mrs. Ducie raised Gaston's face, now covered thickly with the dews of death.

At the same instant four stern-faced policemen entered from the garden.

"Too late!" gasped Gaston, grimly, to their leader.

"Can this be true?" cried Percy as he knelt by Gaston. "My father!"

"My brother!" ejaculated Horace Mowbray as he also bent down.

Gaston's hand sought Percy's as his fast-glazing eyes searched the young man's features. He shaped his pale lips to utter the words:

"Forgive—forgive—my son!"

"From my inmost heart I do," responded Percy as he bent over and kissed his brow.

"Gaston," said Horace, softly.

A sudden light flashed in the closing eyes and new power to the quivering voice.

"Who—who is that? Is this the other world?"

"It is I, Gaston, your brother, Horace Mowbray. I am a living man. What this may mean I know not. But if Charlotte's words are true I also forgive and will be a father to your son."

A look of calm peacefulness smoothed the pain-corrugated lineaments. The dying man pressed feebly with each palm the hand of his brother and his son, and with one long breath that erring spirit bade farewell to earth.

Months have passed and a fair girl is standing by an open window gazing at the bright flower parterres below.

A handsome, stalwart young man with a pleasant, open face, steals up softly and places his arm around the girl's small waist and kisses her fondly on the cheek.

"Fie, Percy! You are not my brother now, remember."

"Only a cousin, coz," the youth replies.

"But loving you more than ever—my star of life."

Dora looks at him archly as she responds:

"Will you always use such flattering titles, sir?"

"Till my last hour on earth, my darling. You alone preserved me at a time when my soul would else have drifted to the shoreless sea of evil years. You alone must walk by my side and guide me through the remainder of life's perils."

Yet a few more months and two happy couples kneel before the altar rites to unite their lives by the sacred nuptial rails, and none present—from the pretty bridesmaids to the weazened old pew-opener—but declare that two more beautiful brides, two nobler-looking grooms, had never stood in the holy fane.

Each young man had insisted upon retaining the name he had borne so long; and when Percy Mowbray, the erewhile ruffian housebreaker, led the fair Dora away as his wedded wife, and Ronald, now prosperous and honoured, escorted Rose as his happy bride, Horace and Charlotte Mowbray gratefully acknowledged that the Shadows which fell with the Snowflakes on a far-away Christmas Eve had been succeeded by the soft, sweet Shine of the happy Sunbeams.

[THE END.]

SCIENCE.

MAGNETIC NICKEL.

PURE nickel takes, as compared with the behaviour of pure soft iron, a considerable quantity of permanent magnetism; but the maximum of this is only a half to a third of the permanent magnetism which may be acquired by hard steel.

2. The magnetism remaining in nickel after cessation of the magnetising force is less permanent than in well hardened steel; the gradual loss of magnetism in course of time, both in warming and cooling, is in nickel greater than in hard steel, even when, by repeated heating and cooling it has, like steel, been brought to a certain state of permanence.

3. The temperature co-efficient of nickel magnets in the latter state is less than that of well hardened steel.

4. The temporary magnetism which pure nickel acquires is about double its permanent magnetic moment, half of the temporary magnetism which hard steel can acquire, and a fourth of that which soft iron can acquire. In its magnetic behaviour, nickel is thus through-out subordinate to steel and iron.

EFFECT OF GLYCERIN UPON FERMENTATION.

MUNK has observed that if cheese be added to a solution of milk sugar, and enough carbonate of soda added to give a distinctly alkaline reaction, and then mixed with an equal volume of pure glycerin, neither lactic nor butyric fermentation results for three weeks, even at a temperature of 104 degs. C., whereas without the glycerin the formation of lactic acid can be recognised in 11 or 12 hours. Small quantities of glycerin merely postpone fermentation.

The spontaneous fermentation of milk is very energetically checked by glycerin. The addition of one-fifth glycerin at a temperature of 60 to 68 degs. prevented the milk from souring for eight or ten days; even two to two and a half per cent. retarded it essentially at sixty to seventy degs. A larger addition of glycerin, half or one-third, had retarded it six or seven weeks. The higher the temperature the more glycerin is required for the same effects.

The alcoholic fermentation of the carbo-hydrate is also retarded by glycerin. A sugar solution containing fresh beer yeast and an equal quantity of glycerin had not given off any carbonic acid at the end of 48 hours.

Munk has also studied the effect of glycerin upon the decomposition of amygdalin by emulsion. This action being much more energetic requires more glycerin to stop it. By adding two volumes of glycerin to a mixture of emulsion and amygdalin, in which prussic acid would otherwise form in a few minutes, its formation was delayed seven hours, and was slower afterwards than otherwise.

Finally, it was established that the diastatic action of pancreatic juice upon starch paste was retorted by glycerin.

THE DISTANCES OF THE PLANETS FROM THE SUN.

SIR GEORGE AIRY, the British Astronomer Royal, has recently published a report on the telescopic observations of the transit of Venus of 1874, made by the English expeditions. Pending the appearance of the deductions to be made from the complete measuring of the photographs, the results reached must be regarded as provisional only. The mean solar parallax determined is 8.764, and this is one-tenth of a second less than has been given by the most reliable previous investigations upon different principles.

From Professor Newcomb's calculations, now adopted in most of our ephemerides and based on observations of Mars, the lunar equation of the earth, the parallactic inequality of the moon, the transit of Venus of 1769, besides Foucault's experiments on light, it appears that the mean distance of the earth from the sun is 92,396,000 miles. According to Sir George Airy's determination this distance must now be considered as increased to 93,321,000 miles.

We append the following statement of correct distances of the planets from the sun: Mercury, average mean distance, 35,392,000 miles; Venus, 66,134,000 miles; Earth, 93,321,000 miles; Mars, 139,311,000 miles; Jupiter, 475,692,000 miles; Saturn, 872,137,000 miles; Uranus, 1,753,869,000 miles; and Neptune, 2,745,998,000. As regards the fixed stars, the distance of a Centaur, probably the nearest, is about twenty billions of miles, and light occupies about three years and a half in travelling from that star to the earth.

A NEW army pistol has been recently manufactured by the Brothers Mauser which is stated to equal a revolver in rapidity of fire. The barrel is of cast steel, and is one hundred and sixty three millimetres in length. The bore has a calibre of nine millimetres and is rifled with four grooves, twisting from right to left, each three millimetres wide and two millimetres deep. The cartridge has a metal case and central ignition. The bullet weighs ten and a half grammes, the charge of powder one and a half grammes. At some trials made with the new pistol twelve rounds were fired in a minute, aim being taken each time; while twenty-seven seconds were required to load the chambers and fire six rounds from a Schmidt revolver.

NOVEL METHOD OF PREPARING OXYGEN.—The author finds that oxygen may be very readily obtained even at common temperatures by the mutual reaction of two oxygenated compounds formed of several atoms of oxygen, such as hypochlorate of lime and peroxide of barium. The facts prove, he considers, that the oxygen is produced by the neutralisation of the opposite electric polarities of the oxygen in one of the compounds and that in the other.



[A SUMMONS TO LUNCH.]

A WOMAN SPURNED.

CHAPTER XIX.

Beware the lure till the judgment rise
To adjust the scales, and approve or blame.

BRENTON, happily unconscious of any danger that menaced his well-laid plans, was using his best efforts to regain the confidence of the professor, and to maintain the ascendancy he had, by some means, managed to gain over Julian Manvers.

Honourable, high-toned even to fastidiousness himself, it was difficult for Manvers to believe that the friend of his lifetime would attempt to wrong him in the smallest particular.

The frank and hearty greeting given by Brenton when they met put to flight such doubts as the professor had managed to infuse into his mind.

Brenton said:

"Julian, I have much to say to you before I go away. Do you know that I am thinking of a brief continental trip, and during my absence, of course, you must have unlimited control of the business. It is a heavy burden to put on you, I am aware, for there is a great deal to attend to, and you are such a conscientious fellow that you will never be satisfied to neglect anything. But I promise you not to be absent over six weeks—perhaps not so long."

Manvers looked surprised and a little annoyed at this announcement. He said:

"This is a sudden trip, Brenton; can you not delay it a few months, that we may settle up our affairs and dissolve the partnership now existing between us? The fact is, I feel that I am not suited to mercantile life; its details are a weary drudgery to me, and the professor has pointed out to me a means of securing an income which will suffice for the present wants of Agnes and myself."

"In what way are you to do this, pray?" asked Brenton, suppressing the anger that filled his breast.

"By withdrawing the money invested in our business; putting half of it out at interest; the balance to be used in perfecting an invention which I have, at intervals, been labouring at for years. If it is successful it will make my fortune."

"If," repeated his companion, with emphasis. "Do you not know the usual fate of inventors? Years of toil and thousands in money are lavished on the darling of the brain only to find it a failure, after all. I know very well why the professor has set you on to ask for a separation of our interests at this time, and I am deeply hurt you should have listened to him."

Manvers hastened to protest, but Brenton interrupted him without ceremony:

"There—there—you need not make excuses, Julian, nor try to excuse Mr. Tardy. He has told you about that claim of Miss Deering's, and put his own version of the affair before you. Of course, if I was ready to swindle a poor girl out of her pittance, I would be equally as unscrupulous as to my partner's rights. I cannot blame you for having some mistrustful feeling, for have we not failed once under my management, or mismanagement, as many would say?"

"But I did not say so, Brenton, nor have I thought so. I will do the best I can with the business while you are gone, and prepare for the dissolution of the partnership at the beginning of next year. I intend to pursue the path I have marked out for myself, in spite of your ominous predictions of failure. Better is little with a contented spirit than a great deal without that precious possession. If a man's employment suits the bent of his mind, he is apt to be happy, even if he does not meet with brilliant success."

Brenton shrugged his shoulders.

"This sudden proposal to withdraw from the firm takes me by surprise, and many men would require a pecuniary compensation for

being deserted in this unceremonious way. But luckily I have kept our affairs well in hand, and you can withdraw your capital intact, together with the handsome profit it has brought in, without embarrassing the business. That is, you can do that when I return from France, bringing with me something to fill the deficit."

"You are very liberal, Brenton, but that is no more than I expected of you. The affair is settled, and in December we dissolve partnership by mutual consent. We have been friends of long standing, and I trust that this withdrawal on my part will not produce alienation of feeling on your side."

"By no means. Why should it? I regret the separation for your sake, not for my own, for I shall take no other partner, and so secure all future profits to myself."

"You are welcome to them, I am sure, and I hope they may come up to your expectations," said Manvers, heartily, and he offered his hand to his false friend, who took it, pressed it warmly, and said with effusion:

"I thank you, Julian, for your kind wishes, and I return them with all my heart. I have a presentiment that what you have this day determined on will be a fatal step for you, but I will hope for the best."

The two parted, and Brenton plunged into the woodland to give vent to the repressed fury that filled his heart.

"Leave me in the lurch, will he?" he viciously muttered. "Take with him the money that never was of such vital importance to me as now? Not if I know it, Mr. Julian Manvers! Not a penny shall you ever see of the money that has passed into my hands. If I have hesitated about sacrificing you, as I promised I would to secure a rich wife, all such nonsense is now at an end. You have listened to my enemies, taken sides with them against me, though you have hypocritically pretended still to have unbounded faith in my honour. Honour! Pah! what does it mean but the weak stupidity of a

man who has not courage to avail himself of every chance in his own favour?"

He was walking rapidly forward, taking no note of the way he was going, when, at a sudden turn in the pathway, he met his wife face to face, and there was something in her wild air and frightened expression of countenance which struck a chill to his heart, unimpressible as he ordinarily was.

"What has happened, Emma? Good heavens! you look as if you had met a ghost."

"No—not a ghost, but a reality that may be fatal to you and me," she panted. "Who do you think is here, harboured by my own aunt, but that creature who declared that you had defrauded her of money; and—and she says that she can prove something worse than that against you, and will do it if she is called on."

Brenton grew pale, and faltered:

"Are—are you mad, Emma? Of what could Miss Deering accuse me, and where have you seen her?"

"I found her in the pavilion, which has actually been fitted up as a studio for her use, the odious wretch! My aunt invited me hither only to insult me by bringing the most dreadful charges against you; and when I repelled them, she said I am no better than you, and she ended by saying that she would never see me again unless I agreed to separate from you for ever."

She paused for lack of breath, and Brenton, with white lips, asked:

"And you? What reply did you make?"

"That I would stand by you and defend you to the bitter end. I rushed away from her, went out into the woodland that I might breathe freely and think, and in the pavilion I found that girl, and she—"

"Stop, Emma, and let me understand as I go along. What has Mrs. Tardy discovered? What does she know?"

"Everything!"

Two pale faces confronted each other, and in spite of her own alarm, Emma enjoyed the terror depicted on her husband's face.

She did not care enough for him to alleviate it by at once proclaiming that her aunt was willing to condone his offence to save the scandal of such an accusation against him.

In husky tones he at length said:

"Why do you not speak and tell me all that passed between you?"

"I would have told the whole story in my own way if you had not stopped me as you did. You need not be so dreadfully alarmed, for my aunt will spare you for the sake of her pride of family; the one you have to deal with is that Miss Deering. I left her in the pavilion, and if you will go on with me there I will tell you everything on the way exactly as it happened."

They walked on, side by side, and Mrs. Brenton gave him a clear account of the two agitating interviews she had held within the last hour. When she finished he drew a long breath, and said:

"Things are not as bad as I feared. Mrs. Tardy has, with her usual shrewdness, only put things together, and arrived at a pretty accurate conclusion; but she does not know anything with certainty. Miss Deering is the only one who has any proof against me, and I hardly think that the small quantity of wine she saved would betray that it had been tampered with. I am not afraid of her, though it may be as well to see her and get possession of it, if that is possible."

"I told her that she had only saved it that she might extort money from you for it. Of course she will sell it to you if you bid high enough, but I think that would be a false move. My aunt would not allow her to accuse you, nor will she do so herself. Since I elect to stand by you she will keep her suspicions to herself. She expressly said that she had not breathed them to a soul, not even to her darling Proff."

After reflecting a moment Brenton said:

"It will be best to see Miss Deering at any rate, though things are not so bad as I feared. You frightened me comfoundedly, Emma, for you led me to fear the worst. We shall only have to live without your inheritance longer

than I thought. As to what the old woman may think, if she will only hold her tongue, it matters little to me. She cannot disinherit you, that is one comfort. Has she been very ill? How does she look?"

"Badly enough. I felt almost sorry for her till she attacked me so fiercely. Now it does not matter to me how much she suffers, and I do not believe that she will be in our way very long."

Brenton changed colour, and said:

"It would be a bad thing for us if Mrs. Tardy were to die very soon. That would be Miss Deering's opportunity to ruin me, and she would use it. I must see her, if possible, and make terms with her. If she wants money she shall have it."

By this time they were in sight of the pavilion. The door was closed, but the key was left in the lock, and on trying it the two gained access to the room. They looked blankly at each other when they found it empty.

"The bird has flown," said Emma, "though I did believe that it would sit on its perch till gilded food was offered to its acceptance. The creature only fights shy to make you more eager to secure her fancied treasure."

Her husband shook his head doubtfully, and looked much annoyed.

"She has evidently gone away to avoid a meeting with me. I fear she intends to refuse to treat with me on any terms. I begin to think it will be best not to allow her to suppose that I attach any importance to the possession of that phial of wine."

"I told you so from the first, but men always think they know better about everything than women," said Emma, cynically. "Let that girl see that you are afraid of her, and there will be no end to her extortions."

Brenton shrugged his shoulders doubtfully.

"I hardly agree with you in that estimate of Miss Deering; money will not tempt her to part from this particular thing, I fear, and the offer of it would only complicate affairs. It will be best therefore to let well enough alone."

Emma went up to the easel, jerked aside the cover from the picture with no gentle hand, and vindictively said:

"This is the painting I told you of. Hadn't you better offer to buy it at her own price? That will be a sure way to bribe her."

"Perhaps it might, but I have no wish to possess such a picture as that."

"If you do not buy it it shall never belong to anyone else."

And before Brenton was aware of her intention, she took from her pocket a sharp penknife, opened the largest blade, and striking it through the face of the female figure, utterly destroyed the canvas.

Brenton looked and felt very much annoyed; but Emma suggested that he should offer to pay handsomely for the damage by way of a bribe.

Brenton said:

"It must be handsomely paid for, Emma, and if the artist accepts the bribe thus indirectly offered we shall have nothing more to dread from her."

"Well, perhaps you are right. I have given you the opportunity to silence her tongue, and of course you should pay the damages. Give me a cheque for the hundred pounds, and I will leave it pinned to the canvas. That it will be a magnificent exchange for her, I am sure. There is a writing-desk on that table, with pens and paper, and I know you always carry blank cheques in your pocket-book."

"That is a cool proposal, I declare; but as I am to be benefited by your violence, I suppose I must pay the piper. I only hope that Miss Deering will not refuse to accept your offering."

"Refuse! not she," said Mrs. Brenton, contemptuously. "A hundred pounds will seem to her a small fortune, and she will be only too eager to grasp it."

Brenton filled up a cheque for the amount, and his wife secured it to the mutilated canvas.

She then said:

"We will remain till after luncheon, but nothing will induce me to stay longer. I hope

that you and Mr. Manvers have talked over your affairs sufficiently to allow you to leave by the afternoon train."

"Yes, I shall certainly go, for I am as anxious to get away from this place as you can be. What do you suppose Julian Manvers proposed to me to-day? I may as well tell you, for you will never guess."

"I think I can guess, though. These sainted people, who are too good for this world, have now taught him to believe that you are a swindler—a dangerous man altogether—and he wishes to get out of your power. He is in a great hurry to act on their advice, but he has hardly taken time by the forelock quite soon enough, ha! ha!"

Her laugh rang out vindictively, and Brenton looked at her curiously.

"How bitterly you must hate him," he said. "You are better at guessing than I thought, for he wishes to dissolve our partnership as soon as possible. Of course, I consented, as it will be ended before long in a way he little anticipates. Only there will be this difference—he expects to take with him the sum he put into the firm, with the large profits made on it in the last two years, and I expect to send him adrift, stripped of all he has the right to claim. He has evidently gone over to my enemies, and I begin to hate him so heartily that I have no compunction about ruining and disgracing him."

"Compunction!" repeated Emma, scornfully. "I did not suppose you so weak as to feel that. I am glad that you no longer shrink from consummating our plans, for I am more set upon them now than ever. Hark! someone is approaching. Look out and see if it is our fair artist coming to look upon the destruction I have wrought."

Brenton, fearing that a listener might have been near, hastened to obey, and with evident relief said:

"It is only Tom, come to summon us to lunch. It is later than I thought—the sun is slanting towards the west already."

The country lad came whistling through the woodland, and seeing the two come out together he made a low bow, and said:

"I've looked everywhere for you, Miss Emma, an' at las' I've membered the summer-house. Lunch is ready, and Miss Agnes was in the dinin'-room when I come away."

"We will go in now," said Brenton; "and Tom as you pass through the back-yard tell Tomkins to have my carriage at the door by the time we get up from the table. We are going back this afternoon."

The boy looked surprised, but he touched his cap respectfully and moved briskly away, wondering why the newly-wedded pair made so brief a visit to the former home of the bride.

"That girl will hardly have the impudence to appear and sit down at the same table with us," said Emma, as they drew near the house. "If she does I shall refuse to take a place there myself."

"And cause the very explosion we have stayed here till now to avoid. I hardly think you will be put to such a test, Emma, but if you are, I beg that you will act more prudently than that."

She made no reply, and they passed into the hall to find only the professor, with Manvers and his wife, awaiting them.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," said Mrs. Brenton, in her softest tone, "but I have been paying a farewell visit to the dear old place before we leave. Mr. Manvers has told you, I suppose, that we are to make a brief tour to settle up some of poor papa's business."

"Yes," replied the professor, "and I was surprised to hear it. I thought Mr. Compton's affairs had been thoroughly arranged before you came back to this country, Emma."

"Not quite," said Emma, carelessly, "and it is lucky for us that they were not, for we are offered a fancy price for the little country place papa took it in his head to buy, though he could never pluck up courage to live there."

When they were seated at the table she looked around and pensively said:

"How sad it is to think that we may possibly be doing anything for the last time. Who

knows what is to come? I feel a strange presentiment that something dreadful is going to happen while we are gone, either to ourselves or to those we leave behind us. My dear Agnes, your face is so bright and happy that I earnestly hope it will not be you on whom the grief shall fall."

Agnes laughed gaily, and replied:

"I fear that you are getting sentimental, Emma. It is not my specialty to anticipate troubles. I had rather look on the bright side, and there is nothing looming in the future to inspire dread of misfortune. Aunt is better, and I hope will soon be quite restored; you are going on a long voyage, it is true, but at this season of the year the Atlantic is calm enough to insure a safe transit to and fro. I hope that you will enjoy the trip."

"Thanks. The only thing that will be a drawback to my enjoyment will be the uncertain state of Aunt Sarah's health. I hope you will write to me regularly, and keep me informed of her condition."

"You shall have bulletins, but I cannot promise to be a regular correspondent. You know that I am not fond of letter-writing, but Julian will let Mr. Brenton know how we are going on here."

"I must put up with that, I suppose," said Emma, pensively.

And her husband sat listening to her suave accents and thinking in his heart that he had married the most perfect specimen of spite and feminine hypocrisy that the world could produce.

The professor had been warned not to allude to Miss Deering's presence at Selwood, but he forgot all about it, and suddenly asked:

"Where is Constance? Agnes, my dear, has anyone been sent to the pavilion?"

Before Mrs. Manvers could reply Emma arose and formally said:

"As we have no wish to meet Miss Deering again, Professor Tardy, my husband and I will bid you farewell before she appears. This has been a day of disagreeable surprises, and not the least among them is, to find that person domesticated at Selwood. It is an insult both to Mr. Brenton and myself to have her summoned to sit at the table with us."

She made a sweeping bow to the whole circle and hastened into the hall to put on her hat and mantle, glad of the opportunity to escape a formal leave-taking.

Brenton arose to follow her, saying to Manvers:

"You will come to town to-morrow. I must follow Emma, or she will be ready to cut my acquaintance too. No apologies, professor. I assure you none are needed; and as to Miss Deering, I have no objection to meeting her myself. It is only my wife's susceptibility that is wounded."

He made a jaunty bow, hastened out, and before the others could gain the door, the carriage containing them was driven rapidly towards the gate. Emma was laughing violently, and saying to her husband:

"I turned the tables on them nicely, I think."

CHAPTER XX.

—But, ah! it quickly fled,
Since but the empty shell I held—
The soul within was dead.

The party so abruptly left looked at each other in mute surprise for a moment, and then the professor ejaculated:

"What a woman! But I am not sorry she is gone. I feel as if I am living in a whirlwind when she is about."

"And I had rather be shut up in a cage with wild cats than have to pass my life with such a companion," said Manvers, in a tone of deep disgust. "Poor Brenton! I pity him sincerely."

"I think you need not waste your sympathy on him, Julian," was the professor's dry comment. "If ever two people were well matched, those two are."

"Then we may hope they will find mutual comfort in each other," said the soft voice of

Agnes. "Let us not judge them harshly—only let us sever ourselves from them as completely as possible. Emma's temper is too uncertain to render intimate association with her agreeable to people who like to lead a quiet life."

"That is the only way, Agnes; but how are we to get rid of her when she is our niece?" asked the professor, disconsolately. "She's a tempest, a tornado, a cyclone. She's a torpedo, a parcel of nitro-glycerine, a whole park of artillery," and having exhausted comparisons the speaker collapsed, and sat down, looking depressed.

At this crisis Mrs. Tardy came into the vestibule, supporting herself on a cane, and with a grim smile looked out at the little cloud of dust raised by the departing carriage wheels.

"So our visitors have departed after kicking up a dust both literally and metaphorically. Take heart, prof, for I think Emma will hardly come back here again to show her unruly temper. I have dismissed her finally and for ever from this house till she comes hither to take possession of it after I am gone."

"Oh, my dear Sally, what has she done to deserve such summary treatment as that?" asked the professor, in dismay. "What does it matter if an unreasonable person like Emma does stir up the house when she comes to it? We can bear with it, I suppose, and we must, for she is your niece, you know."

"Yes—she is my brother's daughter, but I repudiate the relationship; she has wounded and insulted me to that point that I will bear with her no longer. I told her so this morning, though I required her to keep up appearances by remaining until after luncheon. She obeyed me, but went off at last in a whirlwind, as is her fashion. This is the last we shall see of her, prof, for I hardly think she will care to return any more than we will to have her back, even for an hour."

The others listened in amazed silence. Mrs. Tardy had kept her own secret, and no one suspected the truth save Kirke and Constance. The first was gone, and the lips of the last were sealed.

The professor looked at his wife earnestly, and said:

"Something very serious must have happened to bring about such a rupture as this. Don't you intend to enlighten us, my dear?"

"No, prof; it is my own affair, and I shall manage it to suit myself. We shall suffer no more annoyance from Emma; let that suffice. And, Julian, I have this to say to you—get out of the clutches of your partner as soon as possible. He is a bad man—an unscrupulous man—and one like you can be easily victimised by him."

Having spoken thus the old lady abruptly turned from them and went back to her own apartment. Her husband followed her, and Manvers and his wife, left together, simultaneously asked:

"What could she mean?"

After a pause Manvers replied:

"But one interpretation can be put on Mrs. Tardy's words, Agnes. She thinks that both Brenton and his wife knew the deadly qualities of that wall-paper, and meant to poison her slowly. I cannot believe anything so atrocious of them, but Mrs. Brenton has never told where it was purchased, and her sudden departure to-day may have been made to prevent any inquiry on the subject."

Agnes changed colour and trembled.

"It is dreadful to think that even a suspicion of such wickedness as that should fall on one with whom we have been intimately associated. Dear Julian, follow my aunt's advice and dissolve all connection with Mr. Brenton as soon as possible. I do not like him. I would not say it before because he was one of your early friends, but I must speak now and throw my influence on the side of my aunt's advice."

"I have already taken the first step toward a dissolution of our partnership," replied Manvers, thoughtfully; "but I will not believe Brenton capable of injuring me in any way. We

have worked together in harmony, and the friendship of years should make a strong bond between two men. I hope to be a free man by the first of next year, Agnes, and then we can carry into effect our new plan of life."

The face of Agnes grew luminous.

"I am so glad, for you will be happier and safer in your new career, Julian. But how did Mr. Brenton receive your proposal to retire from the firm?"

"He was annoyed, of course, and predicted complete failure for me in my new vocation. What if it should prove true, Agnes? Will you not reproach me for giving up a good position to follow what Brenton evidently thinks a chimera?"

Agnes looked up with tender eyes and tremulous lips; taking his hand in both her own, she said:

"I can trust you to do what is right and best for us, my dear Julian, and I believe I can promise for myself never to blame you, or to think hardly of you, if things do not go so well with us as we now hope. I wish to be your helpmate in the best sense of the word, and if dark hours come I will give you such aid and encouragement as will help you to rise from your disappointments and make another struggle for success."

Manvers took her in his arms, and tenderly kissing her, fervently said:

"My gentle and true-hearted wife, how fortunate I was to win you! You shall be my consoler in defeat; my bright evangel, who will eventually lead me to good fortune, even if the blind goddess frowns on me for a season. I feel all the meaning of the poet when he speaks of woman's love. Mine shall never fail you, be sure of that."

And the married lovers went out under the shadow of the trees to discuss their future plans; to feel the dear delight of knowing that each one was all in all to the other, and let fate do her worst, they would still be true to each other.

Late in the evening Constance left her room and went down to the pavilion to close the windows and lock the door before night fell.

A brilliant sunset was flooding the woodland with long shafts of light, and she lingered on her way, noting the lovely effect of light and shade which greeted her at every turn in the winding walks.

When she at length gained the door and entered her little sanctum, the first thing her eyes fell on was the easel with long strips of canvas hanging from it, and in silent dismay she approached and looked on the destruction that had been wrought.

The picture was not a pleasant one to her, but she knew that it was far superior in drawing and colouring to anything she had hitherto accomplished, and the artist soul within her was outraged by the vandalism to which her work had fallen a victim.

She stood some moments contemplating the ruin before her, wondering who had dared to do so base a thing, her thoughts never reverting to its author once.

She could not suspect one of her own sex of so gross an outrage.

Suddenly her eyes fell on the bit of folded paper which had been pinned to the head of the cardinal, the only portion of the picture left comparatively intact.

The rest of it hung in ribbons, but that only had a cross cut through the face, and from this fluttered a narrow strip of paper on which was traced "E. C. B., her mark."

"Mrs. Brenton! Good heavens! how could she, how dared she commit such an outrage as this?"

She unpinning the folded paper and opened the cheque.

Her lips curled, her eyes flashed with scorn, as she exclaimed:

"That dreadful woman thinks that money can atone for anything. But I will not accept it. I will not accept it! I will not bear with this insult! I will tell all I know, and produce the evidence that must criminate her husband."

"No, my dear, for my sake you will not do

that," said the voice of Mrs. Tardy, close behind her.

Turning quickly, Constance saw the old lady leaning on her cane, white and trembling from fatigue and agitation.

She hastened to place a seat for her, and kneeling before her, earnestly said:

"Pardon me for the threat I uttered. I forgot how near they are to you, or I should not have been carried away by my anger. Look! your niece has destroyed my picture, and her husband has insolently offered to pay far more than its value, meaning to bribe me to withhold from everyone the proof of his guilt. You understand it all, Mrs. Tardy, though you have been so reticent, even to me."

"Yes, I have understood," said the old lady, in a subdued voice; "but how could I bear to speak of it to anyone—to anyone?—not even to you, Constance, though your insight and courage saved me from the worst. Think, my child, what it is to know that the few years of a fading life are grudged to you for the sake of money, when the one who attempted this hideous wrong is near to you in blood, and should be near in affection. Oh, my dear, I feel at times as if it could not—could not be true, yet the proof is overwhelming."

"I fear it is," said Constance, almost in a whisper; "but what I know shall never be revealed, dear friend, in spite of the threat I made just now. Pardon me, I entreat, that I was forgetful, even for a moment, that the author of this mischief is so nearly related to you. If you can forgive the greater wrong attempted against yourself, I surely can bear with the destruction of a paltry picture which can soon be replaced."

"Thank you, my dear, for your forbearance. You owe me no apology for the impulse that first moved you; it was natural, though second thoughts are always best, and you would never have carried out your threat even if I had not appealed to you. What use will you make of that cheque, Constance?"

"I will return it to Mr. Brenton. He evidently meant it as a bribe, and as such I cannot accept it. Besides, it is far more than the picture would have been worth even in its finished state."

"But you must be paid for your work, Constance. That is but fair, though you are quite right to accept nothing more than a dealer would have paid you for the painting. Give me the cheque. I will write to Mr. Brenton myself, and tell him what I think of him and his wife. I shall require her to pay you thirty pounds for the destruction of your picture, and decline the balance on the ground that you will not accept a bribe to conceal guilt."

After reflecting a moment Constance said:

"I submit to your judgment, Mrs. Tardy, for I know it is always better than mine. The picture only needed a few finishing touches, and, as you say, my labour should be paid for. It was for Mr. Kirke, and he told me that I must put my own price upon it. He suggested the subject; he wished me to paint the scene in the dining-room when I was so unfortunate as to break your precious wine-glass, but I would not do that. I imagined an Italian scene—a woman attempting to poison a guest at the table of a cardinal, who hoped to learn from him a plot in which she was implicated. The cardinal, fathoming her intention, placed a Venetian glass before her when she poured out the wine. You know the old story—the glass shattered at the contact of the poisoned draught."

"But Emma was not present when that scene took place, and why should she have taken exception to the subject you had chosen?"

"I told her how I came to drop the glass. She came here this morning, and we had a sharp encounter. I explained to her how I knew that the wine sent to you by her husband had been drugged. What led to the destruction of the picture, I believe, was, that in spite of myself there was a vague general resemblance between Mrs. Brenton and the female figure I painted. On her return here she probably discovered that, and in her fury destroyed it. That is the only way I can account for her violence."

Mrs. Tardy sighed deeply, took the cheque, and after a pause, dejectedly said:

"Everything points to the fact that Emma was aware of her husband's intention to put me out of the way as quietly as possible. It is a terrible thing to believe of my own niece, but I cannot rid myself of the conviction that it is so. Shut up the place, my dear, and let us go back to the house. To-morrow you must make a bonfire of those fragments, that no one save you and I shall know of the outrage that has been committed here."

In silence Constance obeyed, and after locking the door and putting the key in her pocket she offered her arm to Mrs. Tardy.

The old lady leaned heavily upon it, for she was completely unnerved by the incidents of the day. When she gained her own room she asked Constance to leave her alone, and to prevent the others from coming to her.

"I have much to think of, and something to do," she said, with a painful attempt to look cheerful; "and you and Agnes must amuse proff and keep him from disturbing me for an hour or two."

(To be Continued.)

EFFECTS OF FORGIVENESS.

In the garrison town of Woolwich, a few years ago, a soldier was about to be brought before the commanding officer of the regiment for some misdemeanour. The officer entering the soldier's name said: "Here he is again. What can we do with him? He has gone through almost every ordeal."

The sergeant-major, M. B., apologised for intruding, and said: "There is one thing that has never been done with him yet, sir."

"What is that, sergeant-major?"

"Well, sir, he has never yet been forgiven."

"Forgiven!" said the colonel; "here is his case entered."

"Yes, but the man is not before you yet, and you can cancel it."

After the colonel had reflected a few minutes he ordered the man to be brought before him; when he was asked what he had to say relative to the charges brought against him.

"Nothing, sir," was the reply; "only that I am sorry for what I have done."

After making some suitable remarks, the colonel said: "Well, we are resolved to forgive you."

The soldier was struck with astonishment; the tears started from his eyes; he wept. The colonel, with the adjutant and the others present, felt deeply when they saw the man so humbled. The soldier thanked the colonel for his kindness, and retired.

The narrator had the soldier under his notice for two years and a half after this, and never, during that time, was there a charge brought against him, or fault found with him. Mercy triumphed; kindness conquered! The man was won!

WHO DID IT?

OR,

THE WARD'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE threat of the detective, Drovski, had been fulfilled, so far as Viola Devaux was concerned.

He arrived on the morning but one after his first visit to Mr. Leclerc's residence for the purpose of seeing the young ward who had had so much to do with the crime and the punishment attending Reginald Waldegrave's death.

"Is Miss Devaux at leisure to see me?" he asked coldly of Mr. Leclerc. "I suppose that her engagements are not so numerous or pressing as to take precedence of mine?"

There was a slight sneer in his words that Mr. Leclerc fully appreciated; but it scarcely suited him so to do.

"It is a most likely time to find her at home

and disengaged. I will send to inquire whether she is ready to come down."

He rang the bell as he spoke, and delivered a message to be taken to Miss Devaux to that effect.

There was, however, a silence and delay for some time that could scarcely be accounted for, and Mr. Leclerc was not apparently surprised at first, but when Drovski grew first somewhat fidgety and then displeased he himself became singularly affected by the uneasiness of the detective.

"It is rather strange," he said, "but still I suppose that there is some reason. Perhaps Miss Devaux was not well, so rather later in bed than usual. I will send up again and inquire what is the matter."

He fulfilled the intention as he spoke. Another summons more urgent than the first was sent up.

Again an unaccountable delay, and at length Mr. Leclerc was preparing to go himself when the door opened and a somewhat scared-looking domestic appeared.

"What does all this mean, fellow?" exclaimed Mr. Leclerc, angrily. "Where is Miss Devaux?"

"I really do not know, sir," said the man. "I have asked her maid, Louise, and she tells me that she can't find her young mistress anywhere. She does not know what can have become of her, as she did not tell her she was going to take a walk."

Mr. Leclerc looked fairly daunted by the news.

"It is very strange," he said—"very. But I believe she is very fond of going out by herself, and I daresay that accounts for it."

Drovski looked incredulous.

"Are you certain she had no idea of my coming visit, Mr. Leclerc?"

"None—none—on my honour, none," said Paul, earnestly.

Drovski was acute, well versed in the human countenance, and the words and manners of men.

But even his lynx eyes were at fault. He could not trace any sign of deception or consciousness.

Mr. Leclerc was evidently disturbed in mind, and to all appearance astonished. He must have been a most skilful dissembler not to betray himself under that sharp and practised eye.

Drovski could see nervous twitching of his features and the anxious glances he cast on the door, and he was well nigh convinced that he was innocent of any share in the absence of the witness whose evidence was of so much importance to the case in hand.

"Do not disturb yourself, Mr. Leclerc. I can wait the young lady's return, or else come back again, whichever you may most desire. My time and attention are for the moment engaged on this case alone," he said, graciously.

Mr. Leclerc, strangely enough, felt as if he could lean on the advice and support of this experienced official rather than dread his interference.

"Perhaps you had better remain," he said. "I can't comprehend Viola's absence, and I will give orders that she shall be requested to come to me direct without mentioning your name."

"You will do well. It is the best pledge for your sincerity, Mr. Leclerc," was the reply.

And the detective once more seated himself on one of the luxurious chairs that were scattered about the room with an air of patience that seemed to betoken unlimited endurance of the delay. It was needed, no doubt.

Minutes wore into hours, and still the girl was absent. Was it intentional? All was against such an hypothesis, but it nevertheless proved but too true and just. For the girl did not return.

Louise declared that it was entirely without her knowledge. And her whole manner betokened that her assertion was true.

"Miss Devaux never hinted such a thing to me, sir," she said. "I knew she was going to take a little air on the Terrace, and she desired me to give her her walking dress to go out. I never dreamed that she would be away more

than an hour at the most. What can we do, sir?"

Drovski was apparently quite a godsend in such a crisis. He, if anyone, would know the best way of discovering the missing girl.

Certainly there was no cause for fear yet. Viola might simply have gone too far—have lost herself—have had a slight attack of sickness.

Everything was possible of that kind—more likely than any more permanent abduction or accident to one so little known and so well guarded.

The day wore on.

Pauline was alarmed at the absence of her friend. The glozing construction that was placed on it failed to satisfy her fears.

"Where is she? find her, father. There has been too many shocks already. I can't bear another," she said, plaintively.

It seemed as if Paul Leclerc was indeed to rue his own folly and sin.

The daughter for whom he had dared and suffered so much had only grief and alarm and reproach to give in return.

And even Drovski could see enough to confirm his opinion as to the genuineness of his host's ignorance and distress.

"I would not be in too much haste," he said. "It is unlikely to my idea that Miss Devaux can be far away. You told me that you gave her no idea of my approaching visit?" he said, in reply to Mr. Leclerc's alarmed proposal for immediate steps to be taken in the matter.

"Certainly not."

"That is well. Then it is very unlikely that the young lady she has left on her own accord. And I suppose that she has no lover that she is likely to have gone off with?" returned the detective.

"Certainly not; her sole lover is to my belief dead or worse," returned Mr. Leclerc.

"That is well. Then all that can be likely is that Miss Devaux has either met with a slight accident or has lost herself in a walk. In either case she will turn up again, and no time will be lost if we wait for a few hours more. It might rather shade her name if we imagined that she could be guilty of aught else and made a noise about her temporary absence."

There was some sense in this. Mr. Leclerc could scarcely controvert the idea of so experienced a dealer in such matters. Still he was evidently anxious for some reason, even more potent than the actual absence of a ward for whom he professed no very ardent regard.

All this Drovski saw and weighed in his mind during the hours of the weary long-spun day.

All that was possible was done. Drovski arranged it quietly in the house without giving alarm to those who were supposed to know nothing of the matter.

Louise was closely questioned as to any knowledge she might have of her young lady's movements.

And if her evidence went for anything it tended to prove her own ignorance of what could lead to the mysterious absence of her mistress.

The clothes were all there down to the smallest trifle. The ornaments—the purse—were in their usual receptacle.

Nothing had been done that was not consistent with the most ordinary walks that Viola could have taken.

And thus all tended to add to the mystery and alarm of the event.

Day deepened into night. Still Viola did not return.

Louise was at once warm and sincere in her alarm and distress.

Pauline's nervous terror was now too easily excited for any surprise as to its feverish extent.

Mr. Leclerc barely restrained his own surprise and anxiety.

And Drovski, after marking all with a keen and observant eye, began to share in the general panic.

"It is remarkable," he admitted.

He remained all day in the house, and then, as darkness drew on, he prepared to take his leave.

"I will be on the alert long ere you are astir," he said. "Leave all to me till I give you notice. Mischief is often done by injudicious and unorganised alarm and search in these cases. You shall hear from or see me in the early morning, I promise you."

It was enough.

The household went to bed, but some of them at least slept ill that night. Each sound startled and aroused them from light and broken slumbers. But all to no avail.

And morning dawned, and still no news of the absentee gladdened their hearts.

Nine o'clock came and Drovski kept his word. He appeared in the scared household, but with little comfort in his train. He had gained no clue by his cautious inquiries.

No one had seen such a young lady in any quarter where he had asked for information. No trace as yet could be obtained that gave any clue to the search.

Not even a trifling circumstance such as a dropped article or a gate left ajar could be cited for proof that Viola had been abducted against her will.

And if she had gone willingly what could have induced her to make so little preparation for so rash a step.

He looked suspiciously at Mr. Leclerc when this result was made known.

"There can be but one reason," he said, "only one for this young lady's strange disappearance. She shrinks, or someone else shrinks for her, in the prospect of a yet more searching examination than she has before endured. Do you not agree with me, Mr. Leclerc?" he said, his keen eyes resting like a scorching fire on his companion's features.

Paul bore the inquisition unflinchingly.

"I am as much in the dark as yourself," he said, firmly. "Believe me or not as you will, it is the truth. I have had nothing—nothing whatever—to do with Viola Devaux's flight; and I know no more than you do where she is or what induced her to leave her home."

Drovski's eyes turned away with a kind of satisfied expression.

"I believe you. I am tolerably certain of it," he returned. "But it only complicates matters still more if that is the case. To speak the honest truth, I am utterly at a loss as to the motives or the retreat of Viola Devaux, and it is extremely baffling and annoying to me in this inquiry. And yet I am free to confess that I rather trust your assurance, Mr. Leclerc; still I have an idea that you are not quite as regretful as I am in the business."

"I may not altogether grieve that my ward is spared a very painful investigation," said Mr. Leclerc, calmly, "but I repeat I would as soon have cut off my right hand as been accessory to any such flight. To tell you the truth, Mr. Drovski, I am responsible for her safe custody, and it is no light matter for me to be so completely stranded as to her fate."

No one even less experienced than Drovski would have doubted his sincerity.

The detective expressed himself convinced thus far.

"I can see your position, and believe it to be more perplexing than you know, my good sir," he said. "Only that if Miss Devaux had possessed property it would have been an extremely different business. There is no trifling with Chancery in such matters, but where there is no money little interest is taken in wandering damsels. However, I shall not give up the search in a hurry, and I have never yet been baffled, and I hardly think a girl of seventeen will hide herself from me, either living or dead."

And Mr. Drovski, after a few trifling inquiries, vanished from the presence of the stunned and terrified guardian without another allusion to his intentions or belief.

Paul Leclerc remained spellbound.

He had suffered more than he confessed since Viola had been missing.

And, in good sooth, he had no cause for self-reproach save that which was the heritage of sin.

He did not comprehend the causes nor the

workings that produced the instinctive impulse of his ward or her abductors in this strange flight.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AND where was she?

Where was the unfortunate fugitive?

Had Viola Devaux really absconded of her own accord from the home provided for her by her father?

Could she thus throw off all the restraints of her sex and age?

In a foreign land was she to go abroad on the world and risk all the dangers and the insults to which she must be subjected.

Such were the questions that both Paul Leclerc and the detective asked themselves as hours and days rolled on and she returned not.

And such was the distressed and half-indignant queries of Pauline herself in her helpless solitude without the cheering and quieting influence of her friend.

"Where is she? What can have induced her to leave me?" was her piteous wail.

And Mr. Leclerc was fain to soothe her by half true and half pretended assurances that Viola would return, and that it was perhaps best that she should not be near his child at this especial crisis of her life.

Thus passed the next few days.

And at last even Drovski seemed in despair.

And though he did not at all confess to any disposition to give up the search it was evident that a languor and apathy crept over his efforts that proved it was a somewhat fruitless and discouraging attempt. But again might be said:

"Where is she?"

And there was one who could tell the whole truth. But Viola herself was living, and, so far as grief and alarm and anxiety would permit, in health and safety.

It was on the early morning of that same day when Drovski came to demand an interview with her that the girl stole quietly from her guardian's house with the simple and innocent desire to seek for relief and counsel at more impartial and holy hands than could ordinarily be at her command.

Viola was not a Roman Catholic. She had been brought up in the faith of her forefathers and her country.

But still her foreign education had given her a more familiar idea of the practices and the benefit of gaining advice and relief in unburdening the heart to some reverend adviser.

And, whether rightly or not, she did desire to obtain in her present straits some such comfort. In her perplexed spirit she had heard a gentle, impressive cure in a neighbouring church.

She knew that he would be in his place at an early hour in the morning, and she determined to try the experiment and to repair to the sacred edifice.

But either her information or her time was in error. The church was empty. And the early hour seemed to be unfavourable to any pilgrims to the shrine of the large church. It was empty, or it seemed so.

And Viola, though somewhat awed by the solitude, knelt down in the aisle and vented her griefs and anxieties more freely than in the more confined atmosphere of her own chamber.

She had not perhaps been there long; but when she rose and prepared to leave the edifice one or two persons had come in unperceived by her.

She felt for the first time perhaps the singularity of the position she had taken, and was gliding rapidly from the edifice when she was accosted by a female figure in a plain black dress and veil that nearly concealed her form.

"Young lady, will you aid a distressed one? You seem good and pitying, and sad yourself," she said, in a foreign accent.

"What do you want? I fear I have no money with me," asked the girl, gently. "But if you will come with me I will do my best to help you."

The stranger shook her head.

"No, no. It is not that. I want a more sure-

aid than that. I want you to help me to cheer and soothe a dying woman who eagerly implores to see you."

"Me!" said Viola—"me! You must be mistaken, good lady. I am only a stranger here, recently arrived."

The stranger shook her head.

"Are you not Viola Devaux? Is not that your name?" she said, quickly.

"Yes, that is my name."

"Of The Wilderness?" returned the stranger.

"Yes."

"Then I am right. It is for you that I am sent," she returned.

Viola's face flushed eagerly.

"Who is it? Not—not—"

She stopped.

It suddenly occurred to her how dangerous it might be to utter the name that was dearest to her heart and nearest to her lips.

The woman, who was apparently one of the Sisters of Mercy, gave a sad smile.

"Young lady, be content. It is no one that you know who desires to see you; yet I am sure that if you did but understand the truth you would fly to her side, instead of doubting and hesitating whether you would obey the poor sufferer's prayer."

What could the tender, loving girl feel at such a declaration?

"I would not be unkind even to a stranger," she said, "but indeed I cannot imagine who it can be that would know or wish to see me. If you will tell me her name I could judge better what to do."

"Are you so young and yet so cold and suspicious?" asked the woman.

"Surely you cannot wonder that I am somewhat timid after all I have known and suffered," said the girl, sadly.

"Poor child, perhaps not, but still it is no use to distrust at the wrong time," said the sister. "The sufferer who desired to see you, Viola Devaux, would rather cut off her hand than it should lead you into danger—rather die than risk your life."

Viola looked at the sweet, sad face and could scarcely doubt its sincerity or goodness. The very garb was perhaps a surety as to the speaker. And yet it was so strange and mysterious that Viola still doubted.

"Is it far?"

"You shall be there in a few minutes," was the reply.

"And will it be for long?"

"That shall be at your pleasure," said the sister, quietly.

What more was to be argued? Either the summons must be ignored or else she must risk all and comply. And after all, what was there to fear?

Her life was not so dear to her as others, nor so happy as to make it very distressing to place it in danger. And why should this sister desire to harm her?

It might be that some revelation of the mystery was at hand. And if so, should she ever forgive herself did she let such a chance step by. Her decision was taken.

"Yes," she said, "I will go with you. I cannot think that you would harm an innocent girl, and if you do such wrong the sin will be on your own head. Now I am ready."

And she quickly drew her cloak round her and prepared to accompany her strange guide.

The sister looked on her with a species of admiration mingled with pity.

"You are a noble creature, Viola Devaux, and worthy of trust and confidence. And if it is any comfort to you to know that you are safe, so far as I am concerned, I can assure you that both the sufferer to whom you are going and myself would rather sacrifice ourselves than you. But you will know all anon."

She took Viola's hand and pressed it as if in pledge of her earnest regard and sympathy. And then they walked from the church and along some narrow streets quite unknown to Viola.

It seemed a longer distance than it actually was, for the girl was so utterly ignorant of the windings that she fancied she was travel-

ling a much greater space than if it had been familiar to her and straight in its direction.

But at last it came to an end.

The sister stopped before a tall house with a narrow portal that admitted them to a square court, into which some small low doors opened.

She put a key in one of these and both she and her young companion entered the building.

The door closed behind them, and there was so dim a light in the close passages that the girl could not suppress a thrill of fear at the utter helplessness of her position.

But it was too late to indulge that now, and Viola had too brave a spirit to feel all that an ordinary nature would have done in such a crisis. A sharp winding staircase conducted them to a landing that seemed to contain three chambers. The sister opened a door and Viola gave a rapid glance within as her companion led the way. It was small, scarcely larger than a nun's cell.

But it had some unusual comforts that perhaps were placed there in consideration for the invalid.

The floor was carpeted.

There were thin, rose-coloured curtains to the bed and the window that shaded the light and the cold air that is sometimes felt even in an Italian atmosphere.

And two chairs, a small table, a crucifix, hung to the wall, and some books on a tiny shelf beneath formed the whole furniture of the apartment.

But it was to the couch itself that the attention of the girl was directed.

A figure lay there, of no ordinary charm and interest.

Viola could of course only see the face, but that had evidently been one of no ordinary beauty in early and happy days.

It was not time that had so much altered the invalid, for she did not appear to have numbered many more than forty years, to judge from her abundant, rich dark hair and her still brilliant eyes.

But the wan and hollow cheeks, and the lines in the brow, as well as the look of suffering in the beautifully-shaped mouth, told a tale that no one could mistake of past trial and pain.

The sister approached the bed, motioning Viola to keep back for the moment.

"Are you better? You have slept more than usual," she said, gently.

"Yes, and I had brighter dreams, not those horrid visions of murder and death that have been haunting me of late," was the reply, in a voice low indeed, but of a strangely sweet melody.

"It is a happy omen then, I trust," said the sister. "I have had good fortune to-day. I have found one you will like to see, and I have done yet more. I have brought her to you."

The invalid started.

"Is it true—would she really come? Did you tell her?" she said.

"I have told her nothing save that you desired to see her, and that you were ill and sad. The rest is for you to speak."

There was a slight pause.

The patient was perhaps nerving herself for the interview, for she dried her eyes, and her lips moved silently for a moment or two.

"Bring her," she said, at last; "let me look on her."

Viola obeyed the summons.

She came noiselessly to the bedside and stood in the full light of the window. The invalid clasped the girl's hand in hers and drew her feebly down till her lips well nigh touched that fresh young mouth.

(To be Continued.)

QUEEN MARGARET'S CAVE.

A HITHERTO neglected relic at Dunfermline, dating from the time when King Malcolm held Court at the Tower Hill, is to be restored. This relic is Queen Margaret's Cave, which consists of an apartment in solid rock, and is situated a few hundred yards from the Tower Hill. It is six feet nine inches in height, eight feet six

inches in width, and eleven feet nine inches in length. At the bottom of the cave is a small spring well, the water of which rises at times and covers the whole of the lower space. Queen Margaret was accustomed, historians tell us, to repair constantly to the cave for the purpose of private devotion, and the King, discovering the real cause of her long absences, hearing, while he listened, prayers uttered by her on his behalf, caused the rude excavation in the rock, always damp and dingy, to be fitted up as an oratory. After the Queen's death the place was permitted to fall into decay.

A TRUE LADY.

BEAUTY and style are not the purest passports to respectability—some of the noblest specimens of womanhood the world has ever seen have presented the plainest appearance. A woman's worth is to be estimated by her real goodness of heart, and the purity and sweetness of her character; and such a woman, with a kindly disposition and a well-balanced mind and temper, is lovely and attractive. Be her face ever so plain and her form ever so homely, she makes the best of wives and the truest of mothers. She has a higher purpose in life than the beautiful yet vain and supercilious woman, who has no higher ambition than to flaunt her finery in the streets, or to gratify her inordinate vanity, by attracting flattery and praise from a society whose compliments are as hollow as they are insincere.

FOUR OLD MAIDS.

IN novels, no matter how sweet, and true, and good the heroine may be, the author creates a mate for her. Even if she is of the strong-minded, intellectual class, some man just a little her superior finds her, and at the end they are happily matched and married.

In stories there are no old maids, unless it is some crabbled "Aunt Tabitha" or "Cousin Martha" who is introduced to illustrate the evils of gossip, or to show how silly a woman can be in a blind search for a husband, and what a spoilsport she may make of herself, generally.

We do not understand this omission; for we have old maids in real life, and instead of being the disagreeable individuals of book lore, we find them pleasant and useful additions to society.

Another mistake often made with regard to the single sisterhood, is that they have remained unmarried through necessity. No man has seen fit to offer them his love and protection; therefore they are supposed to view, with a jealous eye, their more fortunate sisters who are blessed with husbands; and yet there is more of romance in many an old maid's life than in a dozen married ladies who consider themselves objects of envy to the spinsters.

Suppose we look for a short time at a few real old maids, and see if they bear any resemblance to those we read about.

The first one was a teacher in the academy where we attended school, years ago, and from her own lips two favourite pupils heard her story.

When she was seventeen she became engaged to the man of her choice, and all went well for two years. One bright morning her lover bade her a merry farewell and joined several companions going on a pleasure trip. Nine days later he was brought home dead!

She saw him in his coffin, and took the ring she had given him from his finger, and placed it upon her own, where it has remained ever since; but she could not realise the full extent of her desolation. It seemed a fearful dream, and she was awaiting his return to dispel it.

In this way weeks and months passed, and it was only when other gentlemen addressed her that she fully comprehended her loss. But her first love was her only love. She never forgot the dead.

When we knew her first, she was a handsome lady of probably forty-five. She seemed to be mistress of everything. Occasionally a rasping, sarcastic word would escape her lips that made us fear, and almost hate her, for the time; but we soon learned to honour and respect her, and when she told us her heart history, we wondered how, in presence of her own great sorrow, she could listen patiently to our little school troubles; yet her advice and sympathy were always ready for us, and a few of her pupils went so far as to love this woman who chose to be an old maid.

Now for another instance. She was a plain country girl, with the same ideas instilled into her mind that women are generally taught.

From the time she was old enough to think about the matter, she was led to believe it her duty to remain at home with her parents until some man came to take her off their hands.

She was a thoughtless, careless, light-hearted girl, and naturally accepted this teaching as right.

After a time she met the man she imagined she could love and with her whole woman's strength she worshipped him.

Whether he returned her love is a doubtful question; but he told her he did, and she believed him, as women always believe until they are taught to doubt.

He probably enjoyed the implicit trust and confidence she placed in him, and liked to see the slight flush mounting to her cheek at his approach, and to note the brightening of her face at his empty compliments.

His attention continued for months, and it was generally thought that they were betrothed; but in an evil hour a fairer face attracted him.

She was told how devoted he had become, but laughed at the idea.

One evening she met him in a crowd, and he passed her, with his new love upon his arm, without noticing her by word or look.

She knew keen eyes were watching her, and being self-controlled, it did not occur to her to burst a blood-vessel, or die of heart disease, as a story-book heroine might have done under like circumstances.

She slipped her right hand through her brother's arm, and closed the left one so firmly that the nail prints were visible hours after.

Bidding her friends a laughing good-night, she withdrew from the merry circle and passed the remainder of the night alone.

She had left her home a loving, trusting, dependent girl. She arose next morning a strong, self-reliant woman. She had fought her battle, and won it; and if at times her life seemed empty and dreary, none knew it but herself.

She read more than ever before, and improved herself in every way open to her, and to-day, instead of the plain country girl with whom we started out, she is an accomplished lady and a favourite wherever she is known.

In time, she saw the man who had trifled with her fall at her feet and plead for her love. Her answer was: "No more nonsense, if you please."

Many other men have sought her hand, but she remains single, and the world has gained by her firmness, for we have all felt the power of her pen, and have learned to love her, through her writings.

She is bright, cheerful and witty, but her principal charm is her unbounded sympathy for every one in trouble. And yet, she is an old maid.

Still another of our friends we will introduce to you. In her early youth she had been wooed by one in every way worthy of her.

When he asked her to be his wife she told him she could not marry him. He was angry, accused her of coquetry, and said no true woman would have acted so.

She raised her eyes to his face while she answered:

"I do love you, and you know it, but you cannot need me as I am needed here at home."

He scanned her face with a searching gaze; then taking her in his arms, he said passionately:

"You are right, and you are such a brave little

woman that I fear I can never be worthy to be your hero, for I am very selfish."

She followed duty's call, and he is still her best friend.

The home ties have one by one fallen away, and she will soon be free to repay "Mr. Great-heart" for his years of unwavering love; but at present she belongs to that uninteresting class designated "spinsters."

One more case and I have done.

In the freshness and beauty of life she had many lovers, and though her heart may have responded to their vows, yet she chose to remain single, and care for her almost helpless father and younger brothers.

She proved herself unselfish where few would have stood the test.

We heard some giddy girls calling this lady a horrid old maid a short time ago, and it was not pleasant, for we consider her a true noble woman with a better heart than many who consider themselves her superior.

Now let us be careful how we judge our single sisters in the future.

From the face we can read little, but they have natures and hearts like our own, and many of them have histories, too.

If we need sympathy and friendship from women, it is to this class we should go, for there is no selfishness in the love they give us, and a young girl can have no truer, better friend than an old maid who, sometime in her life, has seen her heart's best hopes lie crushed around her, and has patiently conquered her sorrow for the good of others.

B. N.

THE BRIGHT SIDE.

Look on the bright side. It is the right side. The times may be hard, but it will make them no easier to wear a gloomy and sad countenance. It is the sunshine, and not the cloud, that gives beauty to the flower. There is always before or around us that which should cheer and fill the heart with warmth and gladness. The sky is blue ten times where it is black once. You have troubles, it may be. So have others. None are free from them—and perhaps it is as well that none should be. They give sinew and tone to life—fortitude and courage to man.

That would be a dull sea, and the sailor would never acquire skill, where there is nothing to disturb its surface. It is the duty of everyone to extract all the happiness and enjoyment he can from within and without him; and, above all, he should look on the bright side. What though things do look a little dark? The lane will have a turning, and the night will end in broad day. In the long run the great balance rights itself. What appears ill becomes well—that which appears wrong, right.

POOR LOO.

By the Author of "Dan's Treasure," "Clytie Cranbourne," "The Golden Bowl," etc.

CHAPTER LX.

"THE SILVER LINING."

Wedded love is founded on esteem
Which the fair merits of the mind engage,
For these are charms which never can decay;
But time which gives new whiteness to the swan
Improves their lustre.

"My child, your aunt, Lady Elizabeth, is going to be married, and wishes you to be present on the occasion."

The speaker was Major Fitz-Howard Hill, the time was the beginning of March, and over a fortnight had elapsed since Robert Marker had been informed that his suit was inadmissible.

"Verp well, papa," with a glance as of protest at her black dress. "Is Mabel also going?"

"I don't know. Of course, if she wishes to go, there would be no question."

"She will scarcely go without an invitation," coldly. "Am I to be dressed up as a bridesmaid?"

"No, it is quite a private affair. After the sad death of that girl your aunt means to have no fuss. She is coming to town because everything shall be quiet. They will get married at some church and start for the Continent or some watering-place, but she would like to have you down there for a day or two before she leaves the Abbey. It will be closed up, for she will live in Scotland a great part of her time."

"Yes, papa. When is it to be?"

Next Friday; it is Saturday to-day; you had better go down on Tuesday and stay until she comes up to town, and return with her. Is Miss Travers at home. I want to talk with her alone for a little while."

A hint that Loo remembered, taking care to leave the room soon after Mabel entered it.

"Do you think I am too old to marry again, Miss Travers," asked the major, uneasily.

The lady smiled, even though her face became a trifle pale as she said:

"Do you think any man or woman under Heaven ever seriously asks that question?"

"Ah! then you think there is a chance for me. Would it be possible to induce you to consider my suit in regard to yourself. I never met a woman for whom I entertained such a profound admiration and respect as yourself. I am no longer a young man, but you have been a mother to my child; will you be a wife to me?"

Mabel Travers' face flushed and paled, then flushed again.

She did admire this man; she was quite willing to become his wife, but he must yield to others if she yielded to him, and she replied, with quiet dignity:

"You forget, Major Hill, the same objection which you urged against Mr. Marker stands against me. It is true that I have a good income, as also has he, but my father was a professional man, so are my relations; we have no blue blood to boast of," with a bitter smile, "and I am too proud to enter a family in which I should be looked upon with disdain."

"My dear Miss Travers, you are making a very grave mistake; I never asked who your family might be; it is yourself I want, and your analogy is by no means good. I am not a rich man, I am but a soldier, but Loo will probably be one day mistress of Drayton Abbey."

"If she lives," said Mabel, slowly.

"If—there's nothing the matter with the girl," brusquely, "but let us forget her; will you be my wife?"

"I don't know. I must think about it; if you would only think again about Loo and Robert, and reconsider your decision."

But Major Fitz-Howard Hill's face grew dark as he said:

"I cannot barter for a wife; may I come to-morrow for an answer?"

"Yes," was the reply.

And he went away, while Loo, coming into the room soon after, found her friend and protectress in deep thought.

"What is it, auntie?" she asked, anxiously. "Papa is not going to take me away, is he? I have to go down to Drayton Abbey, for a day or two, he says, and I am always in dread lest I am going to be sent away from you. If I am, I shall die; it is bad enough to lose Robert, and have so little hope about him, but if you go, too, I shall have little more to live for; papa seems almost a stranger, and I am often afraid of him."

She laid her head on Mabel's lap, and the tears which were very near the surface now rolled down her pale cheeks.

Then Mabel told her of her father's offer, and a new light came into the girl's face, her cheek flushed, her eyes sparkled and she said eagerly:

"Do you think you could love him, Mabel, not for my sake, you know, but for his own?"

The smile and blush which answered this question reassured Loo, and she said with joyful excitement:



[LOO'S CONGRATULATIONS.]

"Oh, I am so glad, I shall have a real mamma of my own now. And you will make everything go right, I know you will."

And she jumped up, hugged Mabel round the neck and kissed her rapturously, but Mabel shook her head.

"I have tried, my darling," she said. "I wanted to make his consent to your marriage with Robert a condition, but he said he would not barter for a wife and went away."

"You have not said no; surely you haven't?" asked the girl, breathlessly.

"I have not given an answer."

"And papa was right," said Loo, with a gasp; "you must neither of you consider me in the matter, it is just whether you can love one another, and he may change his opinion you know later on; we never know what a day may bring forth."

Mabel kissed the girl, and the subject was dropped between them until after Major Fitz-Howard Hill had called the next day, when some half an hour after his arrival Loo was called into the room and gravely presented to her future step-mother.

"I am so glad," exclaimed the girl, embracing both of them with more effusion than she was in the habit of displaying, "and I do hope you will be very, very happy."

Then after a time she slipped away that they might talk without the restraint of her presence and herself to indulge in dreams of possible happiness that were very far at present from being realised.

Thus it came to pass that when a few days later she went to Drayton Abbey to stay with Lady Elizabeth until her marriage, she was accompanied by her father, who took that opportunity of informing his sister-in-law of his own change of prospects.

To say that the late Earl of Drayton's daughter was pleased would not be strictly correct, though, after all, it really made but little difference to her, and Lady Elizabeth had not gone through the furnace of affliction for nothing.

The fate of the lover of her youth, who had been wrongly suspected, wrongly punished, and who had died directly after his innocence had been made clear, had predisposed her to be more tolerant than she would otherwise have been, so that after the first twinge of vexation she smiled, and told the major to bring his fiancée with him to the wedding.

After all, this event was a very quiet affair.

A fellow soldier was Major Grant's best man; Major Fitz-Howard Hill gave the bride away, and Mabel and Loo, dressed like the bride in travelling costume, acted as bridesmaids, and when they walked out of the city church in which the ceremony was performed and drove through the snow-covered streets to the hotel where they were all to breakfast, Poor Loo was, I fear, the most miserable at heart among the party.

Not that she showed it; in point of fact she was perhaps too full of spirits to be quite natural, but her gaiety helped the party to pass off pleasantly without more than an indispensable amount of awkwardness, and Lady Elizabeth kissed her affectionately as she went away, and told her she must come and pay her a long visit when she returned to Scotland.

The next break in the monotony of the life of our heroine was the marriage of her father with Mabel Travers, and after this, could she but have seen Robert Marker occasionally she would have been comparatively happy.

Her father was hard and stern on this point as before, however, until about a year after Lady Elizabeth's marriage, when a change came over the scene and reduced Loo's prospects considerably.

There was little chance of her being heiress of Drayton Abbey now, for Lady Elizabeth Fitz-Howard Grant had presented to her husband a son, and in his favour, no doubt, the extinct peerage would be revived.

It was a blow to Loo's father; a blessing to

her. She was rich, of course, for her mother's fortune must come to her, but Robert Marker could scarcely now regard her as unattainable.

And thus it came to pass that his wife and daughter and the force of circumstances proved too much for Major Fitz-Howard Hill's resolution, and one day he found himself, to his own surprise, giving his consent to the surgeon marrying his daughter.

The cloud had passed over, the silver lining alone remained, and Loo, as she hid her blushing face on her bridegroom's shoulder on her wedding day, felt that life was good and beautiful, and even in her own happiness breathed a sigh for her who with all to make existence lovely, had gone that long, dark journey through the grave in her stead.

I have little more to add.

Suma did not long survive the death of her child.

Jack Talboys found consolation for Loo's indifference in the dark eyes of a Belgian beauty.

Lady Travers lingered on for some months, but never regained the use of her faculties, and when she died it was found that by her will she had left all she possessed to her niece Mabel Travers, while the key which belonged to Loo's little box, in which that diamond brooch was discovered, was found among her private papers.

Constance Dorset's confession found on the table after her death settled, as far as the public were concerned, the question as to "who killed Freddy Dorset?" but of her repentance the world knew nothing. It lay between herself and her Maker, for death had come before she could give any practical proof of it.

Mabel is very happy; so is Loo, but as her real name is Elizabeth, and as in her prosperity, surrounded by luxury and love, she no longer can claim the name of "Poor Loo," we will say adieu to her.

[THE END.]



[CAPTAIN MOSTYN.]

THE LOVE PACT.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Thou canst not say I did it; never shake
Thy gory locks at me!

Hence, horrible shadow!
Unreal mockery, hence!

SHAKESPEARE.

THE afternoon and early even of the day on which the sack and burning of the Dower House took place had been a dull and dreary time to the lord of Mostyn.

In truth, much as the Earl of Thanet loved his son, grateful as he had been for the providential favour which gave Hugh back to him, the conduct of Captain Mostyn since his recovery had both perplexed and annoyed the old peer.

Had his son suffered from the continued bodily weakness which so often besets for a prolonged period those who have been stretched for dreary weeks on a sick-bed the earl could have borne with the invalid whims, the childish impatience which frequently characterises the convalescent.

But Hugh Mostyn evinced no slightest outward sign of such a state.

His stalwart frame was as erect, his firm foot trod as decisively, his magnificent voice possessed the same power as in other days.

No. Whatever ailed the young man, it could not be physical weakness.

What then was wrong?

Had he not, the earl asked himself very often, all that heart could wish—a dotting father, a fair prospective bride, loving friends, attached dependents, ample means and well-won and gracefully worn honours?

Yet the face, erewhile so sunny, seldom smiled. Even to him, his sire, Hugh seemed strangely reserved.

He sought solitude and silence.

He was missed from the hunting-field, where

his had ever been the cheeriest view-halloo; he was absent from the county gatherings, where his had been the lightest foot in the dance; he was little seen even amidst the toiling men in whose lives he had so much interested himself of yore.

"Confound it!" said the old peer as twilight gave way to darkness and he was still awaiting the dinner which he yet would not order to be served until his son's return. "He'll not appear even at the table by-and-bye. And, by Jove!" he added, with a lugubrious sigh, "I actually believe he'll neglect to lead Mrs. Orpen down in Sir Roger de Coverley to-night."

For all the Earl of Thanet's numerous tenantry had been invited to partake of the hospitality of the grand old hall on Christmas Eve, and it was a tradition long handed down that it was de rigueur for the heir of the house to take the wife of the principal tenant—a gentleman farmer—through the quaint figures of that old-world dance.

The lord of Mostyn's irritation vanished however as his ears, still quick, despite his snowy hair and many years, caught the sound of wheels and horse's hoofs on the hard, frozen ground of the well-swept chase which led to the principal entrance of Mostyn Manor.

"By Jove!" he cried, "Hugh has brought some unexpected guests with him. Ah, well, that's a good sign. The boy is beginning to take a little interest in the amenities of life again. He'll do now."

His satisfaction however was quickly changed into a terror pitiable to witness as the door was thrown open somewhat brusquely and Rupert Kesterton walked in.

The appearance of the schemer was indeed well calculated to excite astonishment. His garments, torn, disordered, and dank with moisture, his face blackened with smoke and grime and covered on the forehead by coagulated blood, his every feature still marked by signs of the fearful ordeal he had lately undergone, Rupert looked like a messenger of direst ill.

The earl tottered up to him with outstretched,

imploping arms, his first thought, as ever, for his son.

"Kesterton!" he cried, in a tremulous tone of entreaty, "what means this? Where have you been? Where is Hugh? Is he safe?"

"Reassure yourself, my lord," Kesterton replied, coldly. "Captain Mostyn is quite safe and well. I am the only victim of those ignorant and besotted wretches whom you and he have petted and cherished—vipers that they are!"

A sudden pang struck to that hard, cold heart.

An inward voice seemed to repeat the words "the only victim," and the pale, distorted, dying face of James Meers rose before him like a bodily presence, blotting out all else.

Kesterton staggered back at the air-drawn phantom which his conscience had called up, and caught at the unclosed door of the room for support.

By a strong effort of will however he succeeded almost instantly in controlling his agitation and said, more calmly:

"My lord, in spite of my assurances that such a request was altogether unnecessary, I have been deputed by Lady Vavassour to solicit the hospitality of Mostyn Manor for herself and Lady Adeline for to-night and the next few days."

"Bless my soul! Yes, of course. But what—are they here? What does it all mean, Kesterton?"

"It means that the interesting protégés of my kinsman Captain Mostyn have taken to rioting, arson, and other trivial crimes on their own account and have burned the Dower House to the ground. Therefore, being homeless, the Ladies Vavassour have sought refuge here."

At the words the old earl ran out bareheaded to the chase and led the two benumbed, weary and frightened ladies to the mansion amid profuse and cordial expressions of commiseration and sympathy.

The Earl of Thanet, being a widower and having no daughter or near female kindred, had

entrusted the management of the domestic economy of Mostyn to a distant cousin of good descent but penniless, a Scotswoman named Euphemia Macpherson.

At Lord Mostyn's summons the old lady, a thin, scraggy personage, with a hard yet not unkindly visage, made her appearance to take charge of the unexpected female guests.

When such changes of attire had been made as were practicable the ladies joined the earl and Mr. Kesterton and the retarded dinner was served.

Lord Mostyn put many questions respecting his son to Rupert Kesterton as the meal proceeded and the latter returned re-assuring yet half-sullen replies.

"There is not the slightest occasion for uneasiness," he said, at last. "When Captain Mostyn would insist on accompanying that Chartist engineer for whom he risked his own life and who I've no sort of doubt is one of the agitators who stir up these dissatisfied clowns, he had quite a little escort of Yeomanry and others. Of course when he leaves Wilmer's place they'll see him safely here."

"I don't see what Wilmer can have to do with this rioting," said the earl, meditatively. "In fact, he is not popular with the disaffected miners, though much liked by the better men."

"That's your son's opinion, my lord," replied Kesterton, warmly, "and it has of course much weight with you, but I've seen a good deal of these miners and of Wilmer also during the short time he's been here, and I, despite Hugh's unaccountable fondness for him, believe he's a plotting radical, an unprincipled—"

"For shame, Mr. Kesterton!" broke in Lady Adeline, her fair face suffused with a rosy blush. "How can you talk thus? It is not wonderful that Captain Mostyn feels a grateful attachment for the man who saved his life, which good office he has to-day returned, and who risked so much for your rescue. For myself I cannot tamely listen to such opprobrious words applied to one who chivalrously and at great peril to himself protected my mother, myself and our faithful servants from that terrible, frantic mob whom I can scarcely believe to be my countrymen."

"You are quite right, Adeline," said Lady Vavasour. "Mr. Kesterton has evidently formed very mistaken notions respecting this young man. For myself I shall be grateful to him all my life for our rescue from the terrible scenes of this day—the more especially as it appears he has been wounded in our service."

As the old lady concluded her stately speech with an expressive look at Kesterton the door of the dining-room was opened and Captain Mostyn entered.

At sight of his son the earl's face gleamed with delighted astonishment, which was reflected by the expression of pleasure in the countenances of the two lady guests. Even the hard features of Miss Macpherson assumed a grim smile. Over one pale visage only a strange, sinister look passed rapidly, unnoticed by any there, and then Rupert Kesterton also forced his face into a smile.

The earl's joy was due not only to the fact of his son's safe return but his surprise at the change in the captain's appearance.

In place of its latterly habitual desponding look, intensified as his father had expected by toil and chagrin, Hugh Mostyn's countenance was ruddy with health and brightened by that joyous expression which the French term so aptly "laughing."

Not the smile of lip or brow, but the radiant light of the whole visage which recalls the genial glow of a fair landscape bathed in the glorious sunlight of a summer day.

His hair and moustache too had evidently received unusual attention, and in his rapidly yet carefully donned evening costume Captain Mostyn could hardly have been recognised as the begrimed, anxious man in tattered clothing who had stood but a short time previously by Robert Wilmer's couch.

With an apology for his unavoidable delay by Hugh, and many warm congratulations from the earl and the ladies, the captain took

his seat at the table and displayed a degree of activity with knife and fork that still further gladdened the old peer's heart, who had seen his son of late usually content with the fare of an anchorite.

The conversation naturally turned upon the events of the day, and after the condition of Robert Wilmer had been touched upon Lady Adeline, urged by some irresistible impulse, turned to Hugh and said:

"Mr. Kesterton has just been ascribing some part of the miners' disaffection to the influence of Mr. Wilmer, and I have—very poorly, I fear—endeavoured to vindicate him from this aspersion. I cannot believe him guilty of an act so treacherous. What is your opinion?"

She spoke firmly, although a pale pink flush rested on her broad fair brow at the effort.

A dark frown came upon Hugh Mostyn's open face as he answered, with a look of scarcely disguised contempt at his kinsman:

"Rupert Kesterton should have been the last man on earth to make such a charge, Lady Adeline. Had it not been for the good offices of Mr. Wilmer he had not been here to-day a living man."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the old earl. "Under what circumstances was he able to render such important service?"

In a few words Hugh described to his father the events, already partially known to the Ladies Vavasour, which accompanied Kesterton's escape and the subsequent peril of Robert Wilmer—softening down however the fact that his kinsman had left his rescuer to what seemed to be certain death.

A chorus of commendatory remarks upon the young Yorkshireman's bravery and self-devotion came from the earl and the ladies; not excepting Miss Macpherson.

"He is a noble fellow," said Lord Mostyn. "I'm sincerely glad you have such a right-hand man to aid you at the works, Hugh. When this confounded strike is over he will help you to reorganise affairs on a better basis. Heaven knows I am only too anxious that all whom I employ should earn a fair wage for a fair day's work. I have never been unduly desirous of my own gain, and this the men will see by-and-bye. But I will nevertheless leave nothing undone to bring condign punishment on those who have this day done deeds unbefitting the name of Englishmen."

It would be impossible to describe the varied and conflicting passions which raged in the mind of Rupert Kesterton during the last few minutes.

Humiliation deep and bitter possessed him as Hugh delivered his "plain, unvarnished tale." Bitter hate of the kinsman whom he feared would supplant him in his lucrative position succeeded, and last, but worst of all, the demon of jealousy reigned supreme as he marked the varied blushes which Hugh's account of Wilmer's bravery called forth on Adeline's speaking face.

"Is it possible that this plebeian can gain any interest from her," he said, bitterly, "when I even have failed to touch her heart with my assiduous attentions? Heavens! the thought is maddening! If it had not been for my idiotic cousin this Yorkshire churl had been ere now dust and ashes like—"

He raised his eyes involuntarily to the console glass which hung opposite and whose bright surface was illuminated by the light of the waxen tapers which burned in the girandoles around it.

The glass was too high for Rupert Kesterton to discern his own features. But he saw what he had expected—expected and feared!

A face savage yet pitiful—a face over which a vengeful ferocity was fast hardening into the fixed lineaments of despairing death!—a face, pale, smoke-smirched, blood-stained!—the countenance of James Meers!

With a deep groan Rupert Kesterton's head fell forward on the table, overthrowing a costly silver épergne with its burden of hothouse flowers.

The ladies shrieked, Hugh Mostyn sprang up and raised his kinsman's head. His face was

transformed by horrible convulsions like a man in a fit of epilepsy, and light foam hung around his lips, while his glassy eyes stared at vacant space!

At the captain's summons the butler flew to procure some brandy, and with difficulty Hugh Mostyn poured the generous cognac through the closely set teeth, which he had to force open.

The fiery stimulant had its due effect. In a few moments Kesterton resumed his accustomed manner and appearance, but, pleading sudden indisposition, retired to the room allotted to his use.

After the meal the usual assemblage of the tenants was held in due form, and to the earl's great delight, Hugh led Mrs. Orpen through the time-honoured dance with a vivacity which none of his ancestors could have surpassed, calling forth the loud praise of the women, and no less earnest if unexpressed homage of the men—nay, so far working upon the feelings of Miss Euphemia Macpherson that, to the astonishment of everyone, she descended to the floor and with the captain and a North-country farmer and his spouse executed a "foursome" reel in such a style that the fiddlers' arms ached with the lively "spring" of Tallochgorum.

Out of deference to the misfortunes of his unexpected guests the earl had desired to put off the ancient custom, but the Ladies Vavasour, with that true patrician pride which hides its own troubles and sorrows from the world, not only insisted upon its celebration but actually were present during the evening.

Three happy hearts retired to rest that night at Mostyn Manor: Adeline Vavasour with a strange, brooding tenderness as she thought of the moments when Robert Wilmer's arm encircled her slender waist with a protecting pressure; Hugh Mostyn as his soul revelled in dreams of his regained love; and the Earl of Thanet as his mind dwelt on his son's recovery from a morbid gloom.

One wretched man, crouching under the silken coverlet with hidden face lest his eyes should meet a phantom visage, plotted still in his impatient spirit to become a double-dyed murderer.

Fate had helped him dispose of one foe—would she also remove Hugh Mostyn and Robert Wilmer from his onward path, alone or by his aid?

CHAPTER XXIV.

She stood as one who champion'd human fears—
Pale, statue-like and stern, she wou'd the blow;
And tall beyond her sex, and their compeers,
She drew up to her height, as if to show
A fairer mark, and with a fixed eye scanned
Her father's face—but never stopp'd his hand.

BROWN.

As the grip of the marquis's rigid fingers closed yet more tightly around Jacques Cochart's throat the wretched notary gave himself up for lost.

He gasped for breath, bright circles of light swam before his darkening sight, and a dull humming resounded in his ears.

His nerveless hand crept to his breast, as if to seek for the stiletto he carried when abroad. With an inward imprecation he remembered that he had left it in his chamber.

Oh, to die thus in his hour of triumph!

But the mood of the marquis changed quickly, and, reeling back to his chair, he fell into it and covered his face with his hands.

For some minutes the notary sat panting and breathless in his chair and scarcely able to persuade himself that the scene just enacted could be aught but a vision.

He knew that the old soldier was a man of strong passions, but had not looked for personal violence at his hands.

In the old days the Marquis D'Aubrión would have delegated the chastisement of an affront or an injury from an inferior to the sturdy arms of his lacqueys and the degrading lash of the huntsman's whip.

In quarrels with his equals the sharp rapier or the levelled pistol had more than once vindicated his wounded honour or injured pride.

"He is going mad," thought the schemer

when his scattered ideas at length began to obey his wish. "Malediction! so much the better. I'll turn his fury on another object than myself very speedily."

"I pardon you this unprovoked insult to an old and faithful servant," said Cochart aloud. "I deeply deplore the mischance which has befallen—the more so that you take it so much to heart. Courage, Monsieur le Marquis. We can win yet."

"Give me no more of your lying promises, scoundrel that you are! Go on rather with the ill news that befits your raven-like voice. Tell me what else you have to say and relieve me of your accursed presence ere I do a deed for which I should be sorry."

"Monsieur must know of the changed looks which some wear who owe to him love and obedience."

The marquis made an angry gesture of deprecation.

"Stay! My family affairs concern thee not, Cochart."

"My esteem for you leads me to interfere. I can explain Mademoiselle D'Aubrión's averted looks and Monsieur Georges' moody expression when they encounter you. It is because no day passes upon which they do not keep several assignations, and that in these secret interviews the subject for discussion is how best to thwart the plans of Monsieur le Marquis."

"Cochart, you would deceive me in revenge for being half-strangled."

"Not so. I only desire to warn you against domestic treason. I wish merely to put you on your guard. The loss of five hundred thousand francs is a heavy blow, but how much more terrible would be the tarnished honour of an ancient house?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that if Mademoiselle Hélène and Monsieur Georges carry out their carefully concerted plan—if your daughter steal from the château under cover of the night—if they be wedded in a foreign land by forms which Frenchmen do not recognise—if, in fine the daughter of the D'Aubrión house unite her fate to a beggared, dissipated man about town, whose pocket is as bankrupt as his reputation—I mean that then the honour you pledged to the English lord will be broken in your person—the honour of your ancestral line be violated by a daughter and a nephew imitating the runaway marriage of an English plebeian."

The pale face of the old man flamed like fire at this harangue, and at his close he sprang to his feet.

"Prove your words, Cochart!" he said, thickly; "or, if this is false, prepare for a terrible revenge for an insult so gross."

The notary rose and stood by the marquis's side.

"Go to the corridor by the apartments of Madame la Marquise!" he hissed, "and you will be satisfied."

The marquis opened the door and motioned to Cochart to leave the room, then locked it carefully despite his passion, and strode in the direction indicated by the notary, after telling the latter not to follow him.

Cochart noticed the sign of want of confidence and smiled grimly.

"He has it now. I have sown the seed which will ere long bear bitter fruit."

As the old general reached the extremity of the corridor his nephew emerged from a small door which led to the suite of apartments appropriated to the use of the marchioness, and ere it closed after him the marquis caught Hélène's voice, saying:

"To-morrow then, dear Georges!"

It needed but this to raise the already violent passion of the Marquis D'Aubrión to the highest pitch.

As the door shut to noiselessly he seized the startled young man by the arm with a savage grip.

"It is true then," he said, in a strange whisper, "and I have caught you—villain that you are!"

And he strove to drag Georges along the corridor.

"Are you mad, uncle?" cried the young man, making a vain effort to release himself.

At that moment from the chamber he had just quitted a solemn strain rose softly sweet. Deep organ chords mingled with women's voices in a measured chant.

"Yes, serpent that thou art! I know all thy wiles. Violator of the sanctity of the hospitable hearth—beguiler of one bound to thee by ties of blood and kin—disgrace to an ancient house, an honoured name—come with me, for ere the clock sounds the hour either you or I shall lie a stark, still, bleeding corpse! Come to your death!"

His voice rose at the last to a passionate shout and he thrust the young man from him violently.

As he did so the chant ceased, the organ strain died away and the door was thrown open.

In his effort to recover his balance the Parisian reeled involuntarily into the room behind him.

With a cry of rage the marquis followed him. Then he stood transfixed.

How well he knew the room. It had been the most luxuriously fitted of all devoted to his wife's use.

Could this indeed be the same place?

The light was so far excluded from the shaded windows that an obscure gloom hung over all. The walls, the ceiling, the floor, were all draped in deepest black.

The organ, on which Hélène was no mean performer, was hid in sweeping folds of the same sombre hue.

The principal light came from four large waxen tapers, two of which stood at each end of something that had the semblance of a bier, upon the sable pall of which lay a crown of immortelles.

It needed not the presence of the priest who stood by to proclaim that this room had been transformed into a chapelle ardente, and that the two pale-faced, black-robed women had aided in a solemn misere.

Even on the mad passion of the old soldier this sombre scene, all unexpected as it was, exerted a certain influence.

He cast an anxious, inquiring look at the flower-crowned pall, and, turning to the astonished priest, asked, while a menacing cloud gathered upon his brow:

"What means this? What rites are these? Who lies yonder?"

And he pointed to the catafalque.

"That bier is tenantless," answered the priest, solemnly. "We mourn one whose mortal body fills an obscure and unknown grave. We petition for peace for one of whom I know not even the name."

"Cécile!" cried the marquis, in a tone and with a look so terrible that Hélène involuntarily advanced to her mother's side, "are you mad? To whose memory are these signs of sorrow consecrated?"

"To Eugénie's," responded the marchioness, in a tone meant for her husband's ear alone, but which was also audible to the girl who clasped her arm.

The marquis turned his conscience-stricken face from the mimic bier, his gaze rested for an instant on the pallid countenance of his wife and daughter, then fixed with a hungry vulture look on the object of his vengeance.

"Wretch!" he cried, advancing towards Georges. "Come hence with me! Even from the altar's foot I would drag thee to merited death!"

Hélène sprang between her infuriated father and his intended victim.

"Mon père! mon père!" she cried, in a terrified voice. "What does this mean? What has Georges done?"

In his mad rage the marquis pushed the girl violently from him. She staggered back and fell to the ground, her temple striking against the edge of the bier!

A thin line of blood trickled down her white face as she lay motionless.

Her father noticed it not, but again seized his prey.

"Edonard!" shrieked the marchioness, springing forward with sudden energy as the priest raised Hélène from the ground. "Thou art doubly accursed! I mourn to-day one victim of thy ill-doing who lies in an unknown grave, and now still another is added to thy crimes! Thou hast slain Eugénie—I know not how; and now Hélène has fallen by thy very hand!"

(To be Continued.)

LEAVING HOME.

*The faint, ruddy light of the morning
Is flushing the soft eastern grey,
Red banners hung out as a warning
That Phoebus is coming this way.
Oh, stars of the night-time, tarry!
Oh, sun, in thy pathway stay!
For my loving and brave boy Harry
Goes out in the world to-day.*

How many mothers' hearts have echoed a similar sentiment as they thought, with a throb of pain, that to-day a bird would leave the shelter of the home nest? This "breaking-up" of the family comes home the nearest to her bosom.

The anxious care and trembling fear for the boy's future is largely left for her to bear alone. She sees so many wrecks go down of what were once fair-sailing barques—how can she help but fear?

That tender love goes with him over land and sea—even down to his old age.

*And men who seem old to each other,
Yes, with their looks growing grey—
Each one is 'my boy' to a mother,
As when in his cradle he lay.*

If we send out our boys rooted and grounded in good principles—if we have taught them to shun, as the sure way to death, every approach to intemperance, we have laid a deep foundation for a prosperous, noble life.

Any compliance on our part with the evil ways of society in this regard will be fraught with infinite peril to them. The more we have been to our boy in his early life the greater the danger.

Ah, at the mother's door lies the blame of many a wretched life—many a drunkard's grave would not have been filled but for her influence. The reverse side of the picture is as bright and clear.

Almost every one who has risen to eminence in any department has turned back reverently to the mother who watched over his childhood as the one to whom most gratitude was due.

MOTHER.

THE LORD OF STRATHMERE; OR, THE HIDDEN CRIME.

CHAPTER V.

A BREATHLESS silence on the part of the throng of spectators followed the return of the jury to give their verdict.

The prisoner, it was noticed, was pale as death.

Miss Pelham had not been able to be present. Brabazon was there, scarcely less pale than Chandos.

The judge called for the verdict.

The foreman stood up and announced that he and his fellows had found the prisoner "guilty of manslaughter."

The announcement, as may be seen by a reference to the newspapers of that date, was variously received.

People who had known Chandos felt a sense of relief that he was not to die upon the gallows, but the newspapers denounced the verdict as a mockery of justice, and insisted that he should have been hanged.

Brabazon shared these sentiments. The ver-

diet was a keen annoyance and disappointment to him.

But a swift, exultant flash lit up his midnight eyes as the judge arose and made a solemn address to the prisoner, congratulating him upon his escape from the death he so richly deserved, and warning him to make the most of the life preserved to him, to repent his crime, and make his peace with the Heaven he had outraged. He then, with due solemnity, sentenced him to hard labour for the term of his natural life.

The prisoner, bewildered and stunned at this sentence, knowing himself innocent, made a wild, impassioned protest, in the midst of which he was seized by policemen and carried back to his felon's cell.

The court-room was cleared.

Mr. Felham went home with the terrible news to his daughter.

Norman Brabazon entered the Strathmere carriage attended by men in livery, and drove back to Strathmere Park exulting and triumphant.

"It's better so," he thought; "my revenge on him is more complete. He is a convict, degraded, hopeless, lost for ever! He is the same as dead. His title and estates lapse to the next heir—myself! I shall take steps immediately to enter into possession. Gerda is free. His conviction has divided them even more than death could have done. It will not be long before I shall win her also to crown my successes. I left Strathmere Park this morning in doubt and anxiety. I return as master!"

Some weeks had passed since the trial and conviction of Ralph Chandos.

He sat alone in his prison cell.

The light of the dim, wintry afternoon straggled in through the bars of the small window in a pale and sickly fashion.

The face revealed by that light had greatly changed since the hour of its introduction to the reader.

The boyish frankness, the brightness and gaiety that had once distinguished it had fled from it for ever.

The simple trust of earlier days had completely vanished.

The noble features were set and stern in their expression, the steel-blue eyes that had been noted for their laughing light were grave to sombreness, full of intense bitterness and passionate rebellion at his fate.

He had grown grim and full of suspicion.

The faith in humanity of two months since had given place to a hard distrust of all mankind, to a profound and awful despair.

His blonde beauty that had once been the admiration of society had lost its brightness.

He was haggard and wan.

His cheeks were sunken; his lips were set in a hard and cruel line.

He felt himself deserted.

Innocent of so much as an evil thought towards his murdered uncle, he had been adjudged guilty of that murder, and condemned to a punishment to him more terrible than death.

He was still stunned and bewildered by the calamity that had overtaken him.

The newspapers of the country had denounced the jurymen for the verdict that left him life.

His old friends had fallen from him as the leaves fall from the sapless trees.

Not one of all who had known and loved him, not even his betrothed wife, had been to see him in his undeserved disgrace—in his shame and agony.

He had never liked his cousin, but he could not understand why Brabazon, who had known him all his life, could have accepted his guilt as a fact, and never even paid him a visit of consolation.

But his deepest hurt had come from Miss Felham's supposed defection.

That she should have believed him guilty of an appalling crime seemed to him too stupendous for belief.

He said to himself that an angel from heaven could not have shaken his faith in her.

He arose from his low pallet and paced the floor with bowed head and uneven steps.

He had prayed to die, but the instinct of vitality was strong within him; his life promised to endure for many years.

The members of his family had been long-lived, and he shuddered as he thought of the years and years that lay before him—years of bitterness, humiliation and despair.

But that he dared not sin against the Creator and himself he would have strangled himself with his own hands, and so escape the horrors of his lot.

But now, as he paced the uneven floor, worn with the tread of many a prisoner, he thought not of himself, but of the girl he loved.

Her abandonment of him was the very bitterest sorrow of his darkened life. But he did not weep.

His hot eyes had not been watered by tears since he had received his unjust sentence.

His soul had been the battle-ground of such fierce emotions as dry up the very fountain of tears.

As he thus walked the floor he heard steps in the corridor without, a key grated in his lock, and the massive door swung upon its hinges.

His gaoler looked in upon him for an instant, but the prisoner did not raise his head or slacken his steps.

The man withdrew and then there was a soft flutter of women's garments, the door swung to, and a gentle step approached him.

He looked up, and started back, his eyes full of a stormy wildness, his features quivering.

His visitor was Miss Felham.

She was heavily veiled as on the occasion of his trial, but he heeded not to see her shrouded features to recognise her.

As he recoiled she flung back her veil, displaying her face.

She had changed much since he had seen her.

There were bistre shadows under the sweet dusk eyes, a strange pallor upon the lovely young face.

The splendid radiance of her beauty was dimmed.

She looked as if she had been ill unto death. There was a weary grace in her movements—a slowness that contrasted singularly with her natural vivacity and quick impulsiveness.

"Gerda!" said Chandos, hoarsely.

She held out both her hands to him.

"Ralph!" she exclaimed, and the sorrow and the infinite love in her tones smote him to the heart. "Oh, Ralph! My poor darling! My poor darling! My poor dear boy!"

Chandos's lips quivered. His stern face lost its grimness and hardness on the instant. The love and trust, the ineffable sympathy in her tender, yearning look melted all his new hatred of mankind.

With a wild and frenzied sob he sprang to her and caught her in his arms. Her brown head sank to his breast, and the two poor young creatures sobbed together in an agony of grief.

Unable to stand up, for both were weak, they sat down on the side of the low iron bed and clung to each other as if they would never part again. The girl was the first to recover herself.

"My poor Ralph!" she said, caressing him. "Did you wonder that I did not come? I have been very ill. When I heard of that cruel verdict I fell to the floor in a dead faint. They carried me to my room, where I have been ill of brain fever. This is the first day I have left our house!"

Chandos could not answer. The tears that had been repressed for weeks were flowing now over his haggard cheeks like rain. She had been ill, and he had doubted her faith in him!

He hated himself for that doubt. It seemed to him that he had been mad. Her arms were around him, her true heart beat close against his own. A mad prayer went up from his soul that he might die then and there.

She caressed him softly and silently. She did not speak until his convulsive sobs had

nearly ceased and his tears began to flow less freely.

"My poor darling!" she whispered. "It is very hard, but let us not lose our faith in Heaven's justice and mercy. Trust in Him still, dear Ralph. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!'"

"You do not doubt me, Gerda?" said her lover, huskily. "You do not believe me guilty of this murder?"

The girl drew herself away from him. Her dusk eyes flashed like stars. The radiance of a perfect love and perfect trust illumined her rare beauty.

"Doubt you, Ralph!" she exclaimed. "Believe you guilty? Have I not known you all my life? Do I not know you even better than you know yourself? Doubt you, dear? As soon could I doubt the justice of Heaven!"

Ralph Chandos slid upon his knees and bowed his head reverently before her in a supreme joy and thanksgiving.

Such love and faith surpassed his wildest dreams. He had brooded over his case during all these weeks; he had weighed every item of the evidence against him, and he no longer wondered that he had been condemned. But that Gerda could set it all aside as of no value seemed utterly incredible.

"My poor boy?" she whispered. "You never doubted me? No, Ralph, you would not!"

"Is there anyone besides you who still has faith in me?" asked Chandos.

The girl was silent.

"I knew it," he cried, bitterly. "All the world but you has turned against me, Gerda. But I swear to you that I am innocent of my uncle's murder. I never wished him harm. I know no more who killed him than you do."

"I knew that, Ralph, darling. What need for you to tell me that you are innocent?"

"It is a wonder they did not hang me. But I am to be transported to Australia. Think of it, Gerda! I, who looked forward to a life with you, a life of love and honour and usefulness, I am to be chained to a felon, I am to be herded with felons, all my life long—thirty—forty—fifty years, it may be! Think of the shame, the agony, the horror! I would rather have been hanged!"

The girl shuddered.

"Ah, that would have been worse!" she said. "So long as there is life, there is hope. Your uncle's murderer may be found."

Chandos gave a quick start.

"Is anyone searching for him?" he asked.

Again the girl's silence answered him.

"You will think me mad, Gerda," he said, huskily, "but sometimes I think that there has been some enemy at work against me. Yet what enemy have I? Was it mere chance that led the murderer to my room after the commission of his crime? Was it mere chance that made him employ my dressing-room to wash off his stains of blood, that led him to steal and use my own dirk-knife to kill my uncle, that led him to hide the knife in my chimney, that caused him to steal my shirt and wear it and then partially destroy it in my grate, leaving enough to fix its ownership upon me? Gerda, it was my enemy who killed my uncle! My enemy, who desired to destroy my uncle and me at one fell blow?"

Gerda looked pale and thoughtful.

The idea did not seem to her mad. It had in truth occurred to her before, when trying to solve the mystery of Lord Strathmere's death.

"Can you not think of some enemy, Ralph?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"I never wronged anyone in all my life," he said, bitterly. "I have been a simple, kind-natured, warm-hearted fellow, wasting my money upon the first person who wanted it. A man who could commit murder must be utterly depraved. I know no such person."

Gerda opened her lips to speak, then closed them again.

He looked at her in surprise.

"Have you any theory?" he asked.

"I have had a great many," she answered. "During my illness my maid has brought me

all the news of the country side. Did you ever know Thomas Crowl, the old village school-master's son?"

"I have seen him. A bright village lad before my time, he went to London and to the bad, I have heard. He used to come now and then to see his father. He had a reckless face, not quite a wicked one."

"He came home a day or two before the murder. His father no longer teaches the village school, and has been in bitter need. The son on his return declared that he had no money, but my maid says that the very day after Lord Strathmere's murder Thomas Crowl paid his father's arrears of rent and also paid an advance of rent for six months, giving the land-bailiff a new ten-pound note. He paid out further sums for his father, and then went back to London, and has not been seen at Strathmere since."

"But the possession of money, even upon the day after my uncle's murder, is not evidence against him, for my uncle's safe had not been disturbed, his pocket-book had not been taken or even touched, as the valet swore, and his jewellery was left on his dressing-table. The murder was not committed for greed. That is perfectly evident."

Miss Pelham yielded a reluctant assent.

"If the murder was not committed for greed," she said, "what then could have been the motive?"

"My uncle had enemies, I suppose. He was not a man to make friends," said Chandos, wearily. "Some enemy of his who wished also to ruin me, may have killed him. I have thought the case over and over until I am half mad, but I cannot arrive at any satisfactory conclusion."

"Who is the man most benefitted by Lord Strathmere's death and your disgrace?" asked Gerda, abruptly.

Chandos started.

"I do not know," he answered. "Who is he?"

"Norman Brabazon, your cousin. Your uncle's death and your conviction of the murder have resulted in his aggrandizement. He finds himself suddenly titled, enriched, honoured. He has been appointed Governor-General of Australia. More—since you are legally dead—he has stepped into your inheritance. He is now Baron Strathmere, master of Strathmere Park."

Chandos's features quivered.

To know that his heritage had passed to another, and that he was "legally dead," was terrible beyond description.

"Brabazon benefits by my misfortune," he said, hoarsely, "but he is not to blame for that. He was never fond of me, but he was a great favourite with my uncle, who would have preferred Norman to me as his successor."

"You do not believe Brabazon capable of a crime?" asked Miss Pelham.

Chandos looked amazed.

"What a wild question, Gerda!" he exclaimed.

"Why, Brabazon is a noted politician, the leader of a party, and has been one of the foremost commoners of our land. He is a man of mature years, without the impulses or temptations of youth. He has held high official positions; he expected this very appointment of Governor-General of Australia two months ago. He—your love for me has turned your brain, my poor little Gerda!"

"I did not suspect him of being your uncle's murderer, Ralph. I was only casting over in my mind the possibilities, you know. Somebody committed the crime. Who could it have been?"

"I cannot imagine. We shall never know I shall suffer unjustly, while the murderer walks the earth unsuspected!" cried Chandos, bitterly. "Ah, if I had only been killed instead of my uncle!"

The tramp of feet in the corridor recalled them to the passage of time. Both turned paler still.

"I have but a few minutes left, Ralph," said the girl, hastily, "and I have so much to say. Papa is waiting for me outside. You are to go

away in a fortnight. Don't give up all hope even when you leave England. The truth may—it must—sometime come to light. And I shall wait for you, Ralph, whether it be one year or fifty!"

"Gerda!" and Chandos's voice was sharp with anguish, "when we part now we part for ever. Our lives must be henceforth as wide asunder as Heaven and Hades. I give you back your promise, darling. That promise was given to Lord Strathmere's prosperous heir, not to a convicted felon. You must forget me."

"Never! Ralph; when I gave you my love it was not so light a gift that it might be withdrawn in the hour of your greatest need for it. I shall love you always—be true to you always. I shall devote myself to the task of discovering the murderer of your uncle, and to clearing your name. Hope, Ralph. Trust in Heaven and me!"

Chandos drew her again to his breast in reverent love. It seemed to him that his heart was breaking under its load of passionate despair.

He knew that her father would strive to overrule her efforts in his behalf; he knew that all her friends would bring to bear against him their batteries of scorn.

And what could she do? A frail girl of eighteen, subject to her father's authority, and that father a firm believer in his guilt.

Again the tramp of feet was heard in the corridor. The massive door swung upon its hinges, and a gruff voice exclaimed:

"Time's up!"

A look of agony leaped to the girl's eyes. She clung to her lover as if she never meant to let him go.

And he clung to her as a drowning man clings to a spar. One moment thus, heart to heart, and then he loosed her from his clasp, and she tottered towards the door.

At the threshold she paused and looked at him with streaming eyes, lit up by her deathless love.

"Trust in Heaven!" she repeated. "And trust in me!"

She passed out, the door clanged shut, and the bolt rattled into its socket. The prisoner was left again to his horrible solitude.

He stared at the door with tearless eyes and stony visage until the last echo had died out of the corridor, and then he staggered to his bed and fell upon it in a despair and grief, in a wild and awful anguish, beyond our powers of description.

"Lost!" he muttered. "All lost! My love, my honour, my home, the respect of mankind, all I held dear! Who can have done this thing? Whoever he is, my uncle's murderer, and my secret enemy, may the justice of Heaven overtake him!"

(To be Continued.)

A GREAT TEMPEST.

THE following account of a tempest which took place July 6, 1845, is taken from notes by the late Rev. John Webb, of Tretine, near Ross, Herefordshire, and is so interesting, and so entirely authentic, that it may be considered worthy of publication. Many accounts appeared in the public journals at the time, but none seem to have given an adequate description of the suddenness of the storm.

Tretine is a small village situated in a low part of a winding valley, where it might be expected that it would be less exposed than in more elevated situations, and the rectory was a good deal sheltered by the trees. On this occasion, however, it was the very centre of the furious current of the storm of July 6, which approached from the S.W.

About five o'clock p.m. a dense low curtain of cloud appeared in that point of the horizon. The day had been unusually and oppressively sultry, and the whole atmosphere gave warning of a coming storm, distant thunder was heard, and the whole sky was one mass of dark cloud, not unlike a heavy foggy evening in London during

the month of November. The cloud remained at rest only for a few seconds, and then came wind, followed by a whirlwind intermingled with rain and hail such as is rarely seen in this country. These, with the thunder, appear to have fought for mastery in the uproar, while the work of destruction was going on.

The lightning was not so vivid nor the thunder so loud as is often known; indeed, the lightning was too faint to judge with certainty of its general direction. The wind, rain, and hail were terrific; the latter ran along the ground, and was of various shape and size, from the average, about the size of a carbine bullet and upwards, to irregular masses of ice, each containing a bullet nucleus, around which it was fantastically formed. Almost immediately upon the rush and rebound of the first icy shower, it penetrated the window-panes of the Rectory; the crash was tremendous as the greater part of the windows were destroyed, and their fragments struck into the floor, the rooms being deluged with sleet and multiform pieces of glass and ice, the former of which it was difficult and dangerous to extract from the boards into which they had been driven.

The whole storm was over in about ten minutes, and whirled away to the N. and N.W., when it was succeeded by a mournful calm. In this short time wonderful devastation had taken place. Gardens, fields, and roads were flooded and covered with icy fragments. Cartloads, literally, were lodged in drifts and nooks whence they could not escape, and where they remained in large quantities unmelted till the following day.

As to the houses, each of those that looked windward had the appearance of having undergone a siege. Not a window was spared, and scarcely a pane left whole. The destruction of grain was deplorable; the ear of the wheat was broken from the stem, and when that was not broken it was so bruised that the ear dwindled away. The early-sown wheat stood the shock best.

The aggregate loss in that neighbourhood was set at least at £5,000. In many cases it was useless to gather in what the tempest had left, and in one instance, on the road from Hereford's End to Ross, a damaged crop of wheat was suffered to lie until a new harvest sprang from the wreck, and the mowers were seen engaged upon it late in the month of November.

NOW AND THEN.

A WRITER describing the fashions of fifteen years ago and now, says: Consider the difference in parasols between now and then. Then a parasol was not much bigger than one's hands, and was loaded down with heavy, useless fringe or lace, which was always catching on people's buttons and this and that, until it was a public nuisance. Now the parasols are large enough to use as rain umbrellas at a pinch, and they are either black or in very dark, rich shades of colour which hurt nobody's eyes. These umbrellas are as elegant as that of true, pure taste, which never loses sight of the use of an article it is intended for.

PROPOSED DIVERSION OF THE NILE.

THE main stream of the Nile is supplied by the great equatorial lakes of Africa, and the annual inundations are caused by the inrush of torrents of water laden with soil from the fertile slopes of the Abyssinian plateau. This silt is now being deposited in the bed of the Mediterranean, and gradually forming a new delta similar to the delta already formed at the river's mouth. Sir Samuel Baker has suggested a plan by which not only the water of the Nile but the mud, which it now deposits wastefully into the sea, may be turned to good account as a fertiliser of the deserts of Nubia, Libya, and the Soudan.

He proposes by suitable engineering works to divert a portion of the Nile flood water into these

deserts, where it can deposit its rich sediment on the sands, and also irrigate them so as to transform them from a desert into "cotton fields that would render England independent of America." This could be effected by having suitable dams and sluices at different points of the Nile, say at the Cataracts. These dams and sluices, by enabling craft to pass the Cataracts, would also render the Nile navigable from the Mediterranean to Gondokoro, a space of 29 deg. of latitude.

CONVICTED.

CHAPTER XXX.

PIERRE RENAUD pressed his suit with Felicie, but she replied:

"You use costly perfumes, finest kid gloves, the best broadcloth, and you wear diamonds in your bosom and on your finger. You are extravagant and wasteful. I could never marry a man who has the habits of a spendthrift with the wages of a valet. I've long had this on my mind, and now you have the whole truth."

Renaud laughed strangely.

"If you had told me before your reasons for delay I could have set your mind at rest, Felicie," he exclaimed. "I have plenty of money. I have had it for years. I have the income of a gentleman, and I can afford to dress similar to one. I had a fortune left me by an uncle."

"What uncle? I knew your uncles, Pierre Renaud, and they were Paris cobblers and very poor!"

"It was my mother's great uncle," said Renaud, hastily, and in some confusion. "He was a trader in Cayenne. You never saw him. He left me a large fortune, and I have the ambition to buy an estate in France and take my name therefrom. We can be gentlefolk, you and I, Felicie, if you will. I might marry a younger and handsomer woman," he went on, frankly, "but I am true to my old love. Shall we marry, you and I? You shall have a chateau, and servants, and horses, and carriages, and society. I ask you for the last time, Felicie. I will not be played with for ever."

The promised grandeur had their effect upon even the sensible Felicie.

"If my lady marries Lord Mountheron," she said, "and I believe she will—then I will marry you."

Renaud expressed his joy in warm terms.

"But as to the fortune," said the Frenchwoman, smitten with sudden doubts, "I never heard that your mother had a rich brother. Your poor mother was a pastry-seller, and so was your father."

"But my mother's uncle was a trader. I have money in hand. Shall I bring you my book to examine? Shall I prove that I am rich? I can do it, Felicie."

"You may bring me your bank-book," assented the woman. "I do not doubt your word, only, if you have long been so rich, how is it that you have stayed with my lord as a valet, instead of setting yourself up as a gentleman?"

"I am attached to my lord even as you are attached to milady," replied Renaud; "and again his voice sounded sinister to Alex. "But if my lord marries I shall take my leave of him, and you must come with me."

The wind blew a fiercer gust at that moment, and, drawing Felicie's arm in his, Renaud led her towards the shelter of the park.

Alex did not move. They vanished in the park, and still she sat as if stunned.

"Have I found a clue at last to my uncle's murderer?" she asked herself, finally, in a whisper. "There was something false in Renaud's voice when he spoke of his 'mother's uncle.' There were priceless jewels stolen from my uncle and never found. The actual murderer stole those gems. Renaud bears to-day the scar of the wound received through my

uncle's angry impatience in throwing him down stairs. Renaud hated my uncle. Can it be he who killed him? And is Renaud's fortune the fruit of the sale of those lost jewels?"

It was not the custom of Lady Vivian Clyffe to join her guests at breakfast, but upon the morning following the occurrence of the events narrated in the preceding chapter, she presented herself in the breakfast-room, in time to distribute the contents of the morning post-bag, which the butler brought to her upon its arrival.

The Lady Vivian unlocked the bag and distributed its contents.

There were letters for nearly all her guests, and several for herself, which she laid aside for perusal at her leisure in the library.

Nearly the last missive to be extracted from the post-bag was a large, square white envelope, sealed with red wax, and having a foreign appearance.

This letter bore the postmark of Athens, Greece, and was addressed to Miss Alex Strange.

The handwriting was carefully disguised, but something in the bold style of penmanship, and the formation of one or two letters, excited Lady Vivian's attention.

She scanned the address curiously for a moment, and then delivered the letter to Alex, who put it in her pocket without opening it.

Lady Markham was observing her closely, and said, in a soft, insinuating voice:

"Is your letter from your father, my dear?"

Alex replied in the affirmative.

"Your first letter since leaving home, of course. I wonder that you are not all impatience to read it," said Lady Markham. "Everyone else is reading letters; you should read yours, Miss Strange."

"I prefer to read it in my own room," replied Alex, with a slight hauteur, feeling the suspicion underlying the manner of the baronet's widow.

Lady Markham's lips curled in an irritating smile.

"She doesn't want to open her letter before anyone," she thought. "There is surely something wrong with the girl, and her father too. He's a gambler, or a dissipated man of some sort—that is, if there is any father in the case. I begin to doubt her story altogether, although she looks so innocent."

After breakfast Alex hastened to her room and opened her letter.

It was from her father, and was dated at her old home.

Mr. Strange wrote that he was domiciled in a vine-dresser's cottage upon his estate, that his vineyards and olive groves had not been injured by the bandits, and that an opportunity had been afforded him by selling his property at a small loss to a Greek merchant retiring from business, and that he was disposed to accept it.

"Our old home has become intolerable to me since you are not here," wrote Mr. Strange. "I miss you everywhere, Alex, and I regret that I ever consented to your wild scheme of going to England. I cannot help but fear that that scheme may bring great disaster to us. And when I think of you, so young and innocent, so ignorant of the world, exposed to suspicions, annoyances, and possibly insults, I feel that I must have been mad to let you go from me."

"If when you receive this letter you have not advanced one step upon your mission, if no light has dawned upon your path, if you are perplexed to find an opening for your work, if, in short, you are where you were when you left me, I beseech and command you to return to me at once."

"But if you feel that you have made any progress, however slight, toward success, stay where you are and work out your holy mission, with your father's blessing and his constant prayers for your triumph. I have no hope but in you, save in that Providence whose ways have been so dark and mysterious, yet in whom I still trust."

"If I succeed in selling the estate I shall find another refuge among the mountains; the lonelier the spot, and the more inaccessible, the better. I have not heard from you since your arrival in England, but received your letter from Paris promptly, my messenger visiting Athens on steamer-day. You can address me as before, as wherever I am I shall always be able to obtain your letters."

"If you were with me I should leave Greece, my safe refuge for many years, but until I know whether you will soon return to me I will wait here. Be on your guard always, my child. Remember how much depends upon your prudence and discretion."

"It needs all my remembrance of your brave and noble nature, your resoluteness and steadfastness, to reconcile me to myself for permitting you, who have been so tenderly nurtured, to go forth into the great world alone."

"You may remember that when we stood upon the quay at the Piræus, we encountered two Englishmen, whom I took to be tourists, who regarded us curiously. There was something especially inquisitive in their gaze which rendered me uneasy."

"Yesterday I encountered one of these Englishmen at the ruins of our villa. He was questioning old Saba, who was hunting among the debris for melted silver and other valuables, and at my approach he addressed me, asking questions about Spiridon, who, by the way, has escaped from gaol, and is again at large. I answered the questions, but offered him no hospitality, and he went away to his lodgings upon the other side of the gorge, at a goat-herd's hut."

"Old Saba told me that he was very inquisitive about me personally. It may be mere nervousness that makes me see in every traveller a spy, and in this one in particular a sinister person whom I shall do well to avoid, but I cannot afford to disregard my impressions of evil, and I shall be on my guard."

There were other paragraphs in more cheerful strain, indicating a newly-aroused hopefulness; nevertheless the impression made upon Alex by the letter was depressing.

She read it twice, then opened her desk, found and lighted a taper, and burned the missive to a thin blue ash.

Her taper-stand was still in her hand when Lady Markham, after a hurried knock upon her door, entered the room.

The cold, suspicious eyes of the baronet's widow marked the agitation of the girl's face and the fate of her letter.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Strange," she said. "for my unceremonious entrance, but I was so sorry for your loneliness, and just ran in a moment to ask if your papa was well, and if your news from home were good news. Why, if you haven't burned your letter! How strange!"

Alex sat down her taper-stand, the thin, crisp ghost of her father's letter fluttering upon her desk.

"Will you sit down, Lady Markham?" she asked, coldly, arising.

"No—thanks. I only ran in to sympathise with you, that was all. Did you say that you had good news?" and she looked sharply at Alex.

"My father was quite well when he wrote, thank you, madame."

"How different people are. Some are so absurdly sentimental," sighed Lady Markham. "I am one of the sentimental ones. I always cherished my father's letters sent me at school. I assure you I have them still, tied up with red ribbon, and I would as soon burn off my fingers as destroy those loved relics of the past. I suppose I am peculiar, Miss Strange. Young people of the present day, it appears, destroy a father's letters as soon as received. It almost seems," she added, with unpleasant significance, "as if you feared to keep the letter!" and she forced a laugh.

Alex flushed.

She recognised the fact that the baronet's widow was her enemy, and the knowledge struck a chill to her soul.

She comprehended the petty envy and jealousy

of the woman's nature, and began to think it quite possible that Lady Markham might poison Lady Vivian's mind against her and procure her dismissal from the house.

It was fortunate for her, she thought, that a refuge had been offered her at Mount Heron.

A residence at the castle would further her mission, yet the thought of separation from her mother brought a keen and terrible pang to Alex's heart.

The girl had come to Clyffebourne with a feeling of anger and repulsion against her father's divorced wife, but nature and instinct had been too much for her.

She had grown to love the beautiful Lady Vivian, who was so unconscious of the tie of relationship between them, with a love only second to that she gave her father.

She had rejoiced in the instinctive affection Lady Vivian had given her.

To be sent away, to see her mother's lovely face regard her with suspicion, would be very bitter and hard to bear.

Yet if such crosses as this lay in her way towards her father's possible vindication she would bear them bravely.

Lady Markham would have given much to read Alex's thoughts.

As the girl did not answer her insulting speech her thin face darkened, and her envy and dislike to Alex deepened into a positive hatred.

"Lady Vivian is in her boudoir," she said. "I saw her come out of the library, and I fancy that she waited for you some minutes, Miss Strange. In your desire to read your letter you probably forgot your duties as secretary and companion."

"I did not forget," said Alex, gently, commanding her own spirit with a bravery that surprised her enemy, "but Lady Vivian kindly excused me for half an hour. The time has not yet expired."

"Then I will leave you to yourself, Miss Strange," declared Lady Markham. "My visit was quite a friendly one. You must call upon me when you have leisure."

The baronet's widow withdrew with new food for meditation.

She hastened to Lady Vivian's boudoir, finding her ladyship seated before a glowing hearth, with a pile of letters in her lap.

"Do I intrude?" she asked, gaily.

"Oh, no," was the polite response. "Be seated, Lady Markham."

The baronet's widow seated herself in a low easy chair at the corner of the hearth.

"I just dropped into Miss Strange's room, Vivian," she said, carelessly. "I fancied that the poor girl might have bad news from home, or be made home-sick by her letter. And what do you think? She had burned the letter to ashes! Did you ever hear anything more singular and mysterious?"

"It is rather odd!" acknowledged Lady Vivian.

"I never heard of such a thing in my life!" declared Lady Markham, with warmth. "Even if her father had written her harshly, it is anything but filial in her to burn his letter. It is positively cold-blooded, Vivian. To tell you the truth, and I'm sure you ought to know what I think, I don't believe in Miss Strange. And I don't believe in her father, either!"

"Lady Markham—"

"Pardon me, Vivian: I am an old woman—old enough to be your mother. I was your mother's friend, as you have always been kind enough to remember. And, for your dear mother's sake, I must warn you against this girl to whom you have taken such a fancy. She is pretty, I grant; beautiful as a Greek statue, to quote your own description of her, Vivian; but what is beauty without worth? She is a serpent that will sting you, my dear child!"

"I cannot hear you speak such words of her, Lady Markham," replied Lady Vivian, indignantly. "Miss Strange is as pure and good as she is beautiful!"

"Then why does she burn her father's letter as soon as she receives it? I think it is because she fears that you will ask to see it—"

"Impossible! I should never insult her by such a demand. Ask to see her private letters! She could not presume to think I would do so!"

"You might ask it and do no wrong. What do you really know of this girl, Vivian? What do you know of her parentage? There is a mystery about her, and her father also, and you ought to probe that mystery."

"I have nothing to do with Miss Strange's secrets, nor with those of her father," said Lady Vivian, with dignity. "I have sufficient confidence in Miss Strange to believe that anything concerning her which I ought to know she will tell me."

"You certainly ought to know her antecedents, Vivian. You have taken a girl into your house and heart of whom you know literally nothing except what she and her former governess have chosen to tell you. Of course I know that the governess has been vouched for by worthy people. Of course I know that you believe this girl's face sufficient proof of her truthfulness; nevertheless, you may be greatly deceived. You know, Vivian, that I can have no object except for your good. The girl is deceitful; she has some object in coming here beyond the desire to earn her own support. Ask her if she has not. If she can deny my assertion, and deny it truthfully, I will take back all I have said against her."

"You have taken a strong aversion to her."

"Very strong, because I see through her arts. She cannot blind me. She knew Lord Kingscourt before she came to Clyffebourne. She has deceived you there."

"Not so. I am aware that Miss Strange became acquainted with Lord Kingscourt in Greece. She told me so herself."

"She did?" exclaimed Lady Markham, in surprise. "Then depend upon it, Vivian, she told you to forestall me, since she knew that I had discovered her secret. The girl is even more artful than I thought. You have made an equal of her, introduced her to your guests, and treated her quite as a young sister."

"Of course you have a right to gratify your own caprice, Vivian, but have you a right to foist upon your guests an acquaintance of whose family and antecedents you know nothing? Your guests are of noble birth: of what birth is Miss Strange? Who and what is her father? Who was her mother? Where and when did her mother die? Had her parents, who are both English, no relatives? I am an old woman, Vivian, as I told you before, and I presume upon my age and your mother's long friendship for me to speak plainly to you. Can you deny that I am right?"

With all her faults of envy and jealousy Lady Markham was a woman of sound, practical sense, and of many virtues.

She was a woman of the world, fond of ease and luxury, and desirous of having the first place, after a husband, in Lady Vivian's confidence and esteem; but not even to further her own ends would she have told a deliberate falsehood.

Narrow-minded and prejudiced, she believed all she alleged against Alex, and her air of absolute conviction gave weight to her words.

"I do not deny your worldly wisdom, my dear old friend," said Lady Vivian, with a smile. "I do not deny that your arguments are, many of them, well based. There is something mysterious about this young girl, but the explanation would, doubtless, be found to be very simple."

"I believe in her. I like her. If it did not seem absurd upon such short acquaintance I should say that I love her. My heart warmed to her from the moment I beheld her. She is well-bred, a true lady, refined, sweet, and noble; a girl of whom I would be proud if she were my daughter."

"If my baby Augusta had lived I should have fixed her to be like Alex Strange. The mystery about her is connected with her father, I think. What if he be dissipated, or poor? The girl is of good birth, I am sure. Her father may be the degenerate scion of a noble house, although I hardly think that, for she speaks of him with a tender love and reverence that shows

him worthy of respect. Let Miss Strange keep her secrets, Lady Markham. We will accept her for what she is!"

"But this is folly, Vivian; pardon me! Is it right to introduce to your guests a girl who may be, and no doubt is, an adventuress? She cannot, or will not, tell you in what county of England she was born. Ask her, Vivian."

"I shall gain her confidence in due time. Meanwhile, let us discontinue this subject, Lady Markham," said Lady Vivian, wearily. "You cannot shake my faith in Miss Strange; nevertheless, I thank you for your solicitude in my interest."

She dismissed the subject with a gentle firmness that put a stop to any further discussion.

"Yet I can see that my words have made an impression," thought Lady Markham, with inward satisfaction. "They will rattle in Lady Vivian's mind, I am quite sure, until they produce the results I have aimed at. The girl's stay in Lady Vivian's service will be short."

Satisfied with her morning's work, she took her leave, as Alex presented herself to enter upon her duties as secretary.

The letters were read and answered, Alex acquitting herself creditably. Lady Vivian seemed a little abstracted. In spite of herself, Lady Markham's words continually recurred to her.

Why was Alex so reticent in regard to her birth and history? Her faith in the girl remained unshaken; she could not believe evil of one so pure and innocent in seeming, yet it was quite plain to her that Alex was not frank with her, and that there was some mystery about the girl.

"My dear," she said, abruptly, after a long study of the lovely young face with its low, broad, pure brow, its heavily-fringed drooping eyelids, its exquisite mouth, and its massive ripples of tawny hair, "I am more than ever struck by your resemblance to one I knew and loved," and her ladyship sighed. "Can it be that you are even distantly connected with the family to which he belonged? Have you no relatives in England?"

Alex grew pale.

"I have no one in all the world but papa," she answered. "If I have other relatives they do not even know of my existence, and I do not wish them to know it."

"I have no wish to intrude upon your confidence, Alex," said Lady Vivian, kindly. "I can wait until you give it to me voluntarily."

If the remark was intended as a delicate suggestion to Alex that further confidences on the girl's part would be proper and timely, Alex did not act upon it.

She took up a French volume she had been reading the day before, and resumed reading, while Lady Vivian laid back in her chair and watched her and gave herself up to thought, without hearing a word Alex uttered.

The words of Lady Markham did "rattle," as the baronet's widow had intended. Lady Vivian speculated in regard to the evident mystery surrounding Alex, even while she was annoyed with herself for doing so.

The reading over Alex was dismissed, and Lady Vivian resigned herself into the hands of her tiring-woman to be dressed for luncheon.

During the afternoon Lord Mountheron and the young Earl of Kingscourt called at Clyffebourne.

Alex was in the drawing-room and exchanged a few sentences with her lover, whom she informed of her letter from her father.

The earl was especially interested in the news of Spiridon's escape from gaol, and congratulated Alex on being safe in England.

The marquis made no allusion in his conversation with his hostess to the conditions which the Lady Vivian had imposed upon him in consideration of their betrothal.

Possibly he expected that his devotion would induce her to forego those conditions, for he conducted himself towards her with something of the manner of an accepted lover. Alex believed the pair betrothed, and her heart was filled with a bitter pain.

(To be Continued.)



[THE LATE KING OF ITALY.]

KING VICTOR EMMANUEL.

THE late Italian monarch stands forth prominently as a Patriot King. "Rè Galantuomo," King Honest-man, was the curt and significant description popularly accepted by his people. Under his auspices, with his intelligent co-operation and concurrence, and largely by his own ability and character, the unity of Italy was accomplished. Himself and his ministers—notably Cavour—built up, out of most unpromising materials, a constitutional monarchy. On the one hand was priestly or Austrian despotism; on the other were the Red Republicans, like Mazzini and Garibaldi, who would entirely break with past history and past experience, would set up impossible paper systems borrowed from the worst phases of Revolutionary France, would proclaim liberty and the guillotine, would occasionally (as Mazzini) patronise assassination, would aim to abolish religion in general, and who, in a word, were destructives and fanatics.

Unhappy France has, during the domination of Robespierre and during that Commune founded on equality, murder, and petroleum, twice been treated to Red Republicanism pure and simple: to calm, matter-of-fact thinkers and at present to us in England the spectacle is not edifying. It is the great and glorious praise, then, of Victor Emmanuel, that, while to a large extent using the revolutionary sword, he was enabled to arrest, restrain, and control revolu-

tionary excesses, to keep down that nuisance of modern politics the Red Republican menace, and to exhibit to millions of his subjects that noble combination of liberty and order, of history and rational progress, on which many of us in England, its old home, still pride ourselves—a constitutional government and a limited monarchy. And it will not be inappropriate, nor perhaps uninteresting, if we preface our more personal sketch of the king's career with a bird's-eye view of anterior Italian history.

Odoacer having dethroned the last Roman Emperor (of the West) Romulus Augustulus in A. D. 476, assumed the title of King of Italy; but in 493 he succumbed to Theodoric the Great, King of the Ostrogoths, and for a time the entire peninsula was united under Gothic dominion. About the middle of the sixth century the generals Belisarius and Narses conquered it for the Eastern Roman Emperor, who reigned at Constantinople, Justinian, and it was ruled by viceroys called exarchs. In 568 the Lombards invaded Italy, obtained a powerful kingdom, and, by introducing German feudal institutions, accomplished the transition of Italy from the ancient forms of political and social life to those of the middle ages. Venice, founded by fugitives during the barbarian invasions of the fifth century, the exarchate of Ravenna, Rome, and the duchies of Amalfi and Gaeta, on the coast of lower Italy, maintained their independence, after having for some time remained in a nominal vassalage to the Eastern or Byzantine Empire—much perhaps as Servia in regard to the Porte.

In the latter half of the eighth century the Romans, being threatened by the Lombards, conferred the patriciate of their city upon their deliverer, Pepin, King of the Franks, and he and his more famous son Charlemagne in turn conferred it upon the Popes—thereby originating the States of the Church and the Temporal Power of which we have heard so much, and of which probably we have not yet heard the last. Charlemagne conquered the Lombard kingdom and annexed it to his own Frankish empire. On Christmas Day 800 Charlemagne was crowned by Pope Leo the Third in St. Peter's Church at Rome, and thus the great mediæval "Holy Roman Empire"—which latterly was mostly in German or Austrian hands—was established. Nominally, the Roman Empire acquired by Charlemagne extended till 1806, when it was formally abolished, in the person of Francis the Second, by Buonaparte. Its design was this: pope and emperor (with subordinate states and kings on feudal plan) were over the European continent co-ordinate—the emperor being supreme in temporal and the pope in spiritual things. When in 843 the empire of Charlemagne was divided among his grandsons, the Italian provinces fell to the share of Lothair; but the rule was soon upset, and anarchy followed. Lothair having been poisoned, Adelaide his widow appealed to Otto the First, King of Germany, who married her, conquered Lombardy, and in a subsequent campaign obtained the imperial crown.

In lower Italy the republics of Naples, Gaeta, and Amalfi and the duchy of Beneventum, after long wars with the Saracens, returned once more under the rule of the Eastern Emperor at Constantinople, while the greater portion of the Peninsula remained in subjection to Germany. The Italians hated the Germans, and the German Kings were not sufficiently compliant to please the Popes. In lower Italy (1057-1154) the Normans, in Apulia and Calabria, under Robert Guiscard and his successors, wrested provinces from Constantinople, and established their sway. One of the German rulers over Italy, Henry the Third, was compelled to humble himself before Gregory the Seventh at Canossa. Gradually the Lombard kingdom was resolved into prosperous municipalities—oligarchic commonwealths—and Milan, Venice, Pisa, and Genoa became centres of the famous Lombard league, which, allied with the Popes, successfully opposed the exertions of the German kings and elective emperors to erect Italy into a hereditary kingdom for a German dynasty. The national or Italian party was called Guelphs, that of the emperors Ghibellines. After a long struggle the Emperor Frederick I. was compelled to recognise the autonomy of the cities belonging to the league; he obtained however the kingdom of the Two Sicilies by the marriage of his son with the daughter of the last Norman king.

In 1254 the German dynasty was completely overthrown in upper Italy, while the kingdom of the Two Sicilies was taken from them by Charles of Anjou. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Free Cities—as Venice, Genoa, Florence—were rent by dissensions between the aristocratic and popular parties: the victorious popular party succumbed ultimately to petty tyrants. Thus, Pisa fell under the rule of Faggiola, 1314, Padua under the Carrara dynasty 1318, Mantua under the Gonzagas 1328, Alessandria and Cremona under the Viscontis (1328), Ferrara under the house of Este. The Polenta family ruled in Ravenna, the Scala family in Verona, the Pepoli family in Bologna. Genoa elected its first Doge in 1339. At Rome the democratic party under Rienzi in 1347 was successful for a time. Besides all the miseries engendered by these internal dissensions, armies of robbers, consisting of discharged soldiers, plundered the country, the population was decimated by famine, and a most terrible plague actually mowed down two-thirds of the inhabitants of the peninsula. But during these inflictions literature and the fine arts flourished wonderfully; curiously, it was in this dark period that Boccaccio gave us his immortal story book, the

Decameron. In lower Italy the people massacred the French (the Sicilian Vespers, 1282), but Charles of Anjou consolidated his dynasty in Naples. Toward the latter end of the fourteenth century and during the fifteenth, five states were predominant: Naples, the Papal States, Florence, Milan, and Venice. In Florence the famous Medici family rose to supreme power; at Milan the Viscontis and afterwards the Sforzas extended their sway over Lombardy. Venice, under a strong oligarchical government—the very antipodes of a red republic in our modern sense—conquered Padua, Verona, Vicenza, part of Dalmatia, and established colonies in the Greek archipelago and on the shores of the Black Sea. Early in the sixteenth century Italy became the theatre of wars between the rival French and Austrian houses. Charles VIII. of France attempted to conquer Naples. French ambition was finally crushed in the defeat at Pavia in 1525. From that time for over a hundred and fifty years Italy enjoyed comparative peace, in which time its system was fairly consolidated. In Florence the Medici held hereditary power; the principality of Monteferrat fell to the Gonzagas, Dukes of Mantua; Parma and Piacenza to the Farnese family, descendants of Pope Paul III.; Milan and Naples were secured to Spain by the Emperor Charles the Fifth; in the extreme north-west the ancestors of Victor Emmanuel, the ducal house of Savoy, obtained Piedmont.

Venice, whose supremacy had declined after the discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope, lost Crete in 1669, but reconquered the Morea, which it had formerly held. More troubles and changes were caused by the French wars of Louis the Fourteenth. Savoy and Piedmont were repeatedly occupied by the French. In 1706-7 Austria conquered Milan, Mantua, and Monteferrat; by the peace of Utrecht in 1713 Austria obtained Sardinia and Naples, but in 1720 exchanged Sardinia for Sicily, which had been given to Piedmont—hence Victor Emmanuel's ancestors acquired Sardinia. Parma and Piacenza fell to a Spanish prince, and in 1738 passed to Austria. In Tuscany the Medici family became extinct in 1737 and passed to Francis of Lorraine, husband of Maria Theresa. About the middle of the eighteenth century a large portion of Italy was subject to the great houses of Lorraine, Bourbon, and Savoy. The republics of Genoa and Venice were sunk into utter insignificance. Political and social life seemed apathetic or gone down to the great European tempest of the French Revolution. In 1792 a French army invaded Savoy, which was annexed to France in 1796. In 1797 Buonaparte—who had destroyed the Venetian republic—surrendered it to Austria, and erected Milan, Mantua, part of Parma, and Modena into the "Cisalpine Republic." Genoa was called the Ligurian Republic. The Papal States became the Roman Republic. Naples, on the expulsion of Ferdinand the Fourth, who had aided with Austria, was similarly treated. Austrians and Russians reconquered Upper Italy and the British (as Sir John Stuart at Maida) Russians, and Turks lower Italy; but 1800 Buonaparte restored the French supremacy. In 1802 the Cisalpine became (under Buonaparte) the Italian Republic, and in 1805 it was given to his stepson, Eugène Beauharnois; Venice, Istria, and Dalmatia were added to it. Subsequently the Ligurian Republic, Parma, and Piacenza were actually annexed to France, while Naples was made a convenient kingdom, first for Joseph Buonaparte, and afterwards in 1808 for Murat. In 1808 the Papal States and Tuscany were added to France. Napoleon's supremacy continued till his Russian campaign in 1812. Murat, who had turned against his benefactor, was however expelled, and on attempting to recapture Naples was in 1815 shot by a court-martial.

By the Congress of Vienna the King of Sardinia was reinstated in his former possessions with the addition of Genoa; Lombardy and Venice were given to Austria; Modena went to the dynasty of Este; Tuscany to that of Hapsburg Lorraine; Parma to Marie Louise; Lucca to a Bourbon princess; the Papal States and

the Two Sicilies were restored to their former rulers; the republic of San Marino and the petty principality of Monaco continued undisturbed in all the great changes; and Malta remained in the hands of England. The wishes of the advocates of national unity and constitutional liberty were thus for a season baffled. In 1820 and 1821 revolutionary outbreaks occurred in Naples and Sardinia, in 1831 risings in Parma, Modena, and the Papal States, but they were suppressed by Austria. Austria for many years remained absolute master of the situation. The French Revolution of 1843 was the signal for a rising in upper Italy. The present Pope has inaugurated various reforms at Rome of a liberal character. The father of the late King of Italy—Charles Albert, King of Sardinia—took the lead of the Italian patriots, but in 1848 and again in 1849 was beaten by the Austrians under Radetzky. The duchies and the states of the Church—the Pope had fled and a Republic was set up in Rome—were re-established and, after the fatal battle of Novara, the King of Sardinia abdicated the Crown in favour of his son—Victor Emmanuel.

Victor Emmanuel was born March 14, 1820, being the eldest son of King Charles Albert of Sardinia and the Archduchess Theresia of Austria. He succeeded to the throne of Sardinia, on the abdication of his father, March 23, 1849; proclaimed King of Italy, by vote of the Italian Parliament, March 17, 1861. He married in April 1842 the Archduchess Adelaide of Austria; became a widower, Jan. 20, 1855; married a second time in "morganatic" union, September, 1872, to Rose Vercellana, created Countess de Millefiori. His children are: Princess Clotilde, married in 1859 to Prince Napoleon; Umberto, the Prince of Piedmont, and present King of Italy, born 1844; Prince Amadeo, Duke of Aosta, elected King of Spain in 1870, and abdicated 1873; Vittorio, born 1870, and Ludovico 1873; Princess Pia born 1847 and married in 1862 to the King of Portugal. The origin of the house of Savoy is not historically established; but genealogists trace it to a German Count Berthold, whose descendants in the twelfth century were counts of the Empire, and whose family so far back as 1383 possessed the territory of Nice. In 1416 the Counts of Savoy adopted the title of duke, and in 1418 obtained the principality of Piedmont; in 1713 they obtained the kingdom of Sicily, which in 1720 they exchanged for Sardinia. So much in brief for the king's personal belongings.

Politically he succeeded to a heritage of disaster. It was an axiom with his great minister Cavour that if Sardinia was to lead she must appear as the champion of constitutional progress. Domestic reforms occupied his attention. Commercial treaties on free trade principles were negotiated with England, France, and Belgium. Foreign commerce was encouraged. The Sardinian navy was reconstituted and the administration of the army carefully investigated.

While Victor Emmanuel fostered liberal institutions, severe reactionary measures occurred in Modena and the Papal States, and the Austrian Government in Lombardy and Venice sought to reconcile the people by material benefits, such as the construction of railroads, the improvement of the port of Venice, and reforms in the tariff and in the postal system. In 1853 an unsuccessful insurrection broke out at Milan. In 1855 the King of Italy and his minister, much against the wish of the Liberals, joined the Anglo-French alliance against Russia, sending the Italian contingent under General Della Marmora to the Crimea; and this wise proceeding tended especially to vindicate a name and a place for Sardinia in the councils of Europe. In the battle of Tchernaya the Italians covered themselves with glory.

At the Congress of Paris, on the conclusion of the war, Cavour was able to lay the state of Italy before the plenipotentiaries, to urge her need of freer rule, and to show the evils of Austrian domination. In 1859 came the War for an Idea—in which the people of Italy were directed to look to Napoleon for aid. The Duke of Modena, the Duchess of Parma, and the Grand Duke of

Tuscany fled abruptly from their States. The Austrians were defeated at Magenta, then at Solferino, but, regarding the threatening attitude of Prussia, the French Emperor concluded a truce, which was immediately followed by a meeting of the two Emperors and the peace of Villafranca. Italy was only partially freed: Lombardy, exclusive of Mantua and Peschiera, was ceded to Sardinia, and it was proposed to restore the dukes; but all the plans were modified by Garibaldi's invasion of Sicily in 1860. The victories gained by Garibaldi, the flight of Francis the Second of Naples to Gaeta, and the surrender of that stronghold in February, 1861, removed the last formidable obstacles to unity. On February 18, 1861, the first Italian parliament assembled at Turin, and on the twenty-sixth Victor Emmanuel was decreed King of Italy. Savoy and Nice were ceded to France: a disagreeable political necessity, which, perhaps, waits for revision.

In June 1861 Cavour died, and was succeeded by Ricasoli. In 1862 Garibaldi landed in Calabria; but was taken prisoner by the government troops at Aspromonte. In 1864 a treaty was concluded with France arranging for the evacuation of Rome and providing for the transfer of the seat of government from Turin to Florence. In 1866 Italy joined Prussia against Austria: the Italians however generally suffered in the war—at Custoza and with Garibaldi in the Tyrol. By the peace, however, Austria ceded Venetia to Italy: and another stone was added to the edifice. In November 1867 the Garibaldian attempt on Rome was defeated at Mentana. At the beginning of the Franco-German war the French Emperor withdrew wholly from Italy: on Sept. 20, 1870, after a brief resistance, the Italian troops entered Rome, in December the Italian Parliament declared Rome the capital of Italy—and on July 2, 1871, Victor Emmanuel made his solemn entry into Rome, and took up his residence at the Quirinal.

The Pope, deprived of his sovereignty, was to remain in possession of the Vatican with its dependencies and of the Lateran and Castle Gandolfo. On Nov. 27, 1871, the first Italian parliament was held in Rome. Recent years have been comparatively uneventful. But what events have crowded into the life of this one man; the work of centuries has been accomplished! It must be admitted that his occupation of Rome was against the letter of treaty faith; but if ever treaty were violated well, perhaps this was the occasion. It would be most dangerous to approve violations of treaties; better not to make them, or, as Stuart Mill once advocated, to make and honestly maintain them, but for a stated period only. Otherwise, as we certainly see, treaties, however solemnly guarded, are kept precisely while convenient, or till an opportunity arrives for breaking them with impunity.

The King of Italy, who had been suffering from pleurisy, occasioned by a violent fever, expired Jan. 9th. His deeds and his fame are well and worthily before us; but, as a ruler, he will long be admired as being the first King of United Italy, and as being in no mean sense the Father of his People.

NINE REASONS AGAINST THE BANQUET OF THE NINTH.

(By one who has to weigh his words.)

FIRSTLY.—I am past the age at which a stuffy and stifling public banquet can be viewed in the light of an agreeable recreation.

SECONDLY.—On such occasions one has to hear as well as make speeches.

THIRDLY.—I can't get on my legs without indulging in a little of that epigrammatic point for which it pleases me to be famous—and points prick.

FOURTHLY.—I rather think that, as things go, "least said, soonest mended" is the appropriate ancestral wisdom.

FIFTHLY.—I am not quite so sure how many campaigns the country is prepared for—if any.

SIXTHLY.—I have no wish, at the present moment, to add to the obvious embarrassments of His August Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias.

SEVENTHLY.—Why set the "Spectator" and its sycophants barking at my heels till the end of the Recess, to say nothing of the laudation of my effusive friends of the "D. T."?

EIGHTHLY.—If talking is to be done, Derby will be there; and what is language given him for, but to conceal my thoughts?

NINTHLY.—A quiet day at Haghenden is worth a great many Guildhall dinners.

And yet I shall have to go—I know I shall—and to talk too!

For this amongst the rest was I upraised.

FLOWER POTS.

SAVE the tin fruit cans, and convert them into tasteful flower pots in the following manner:

With a can opener cut off any rough or projecting portions of the cover, leaving a narrow rim to project inward. With a pair of pliers, or a small hammer, bend this rim down. This gives firmness to the top of the can. Punch three or four small holes through the bottom of the can, then paint it with varnish made of gum shellac dissolved in alcohol, and coloured with lamp black and a little yellow ochre to give a dark brown colour.

The cans may be ornamented by pasting on them little medallion flowers or pictures. They are handsomer than the ordinary flower pots, require less watering, and keep the plants free from all insects, owing to the presence of iron rust in the can. One of the prettiest arrangements for plants we have seen, was a window with two narrow shelves placed one above the other, on which were these home-made flower pots, containing heliotropes, geraniums, pinks, begonias, petunias, fuchsias, and other plants, all as thrifty as if in a greenhouse. They should be showered once a fortnight with lukewarm water, using a whisk broom for the purpose, and watered sparingly every second day.

On very cold nights newspapers may be placed between the window and the plants, to protect them from frost.

THE CANAL BOATS ACT.

THIS Act came into operation on the 1st of January, but will not be enforced before January 1879. All canal boats, barges, or flats must then be registered, marked, and numbered in a prominent place by their owners, stating which place the boat is registered as belonging to, before they can be used as dwellings. Certificates of registration will be obtainable of the officer of registration, for which a small fee will be charged. Provision will have to be made by the owner for proper ventilation and the separation of the sexes, and the boats will have frequently to be thoroughly cleaned, painted, and rendered habitable. Children living in a canal boat, barge, or flat are to be subject to the compulsory clauses of the Education Act which are in force at the place at which the boat is registered as belonging to, and will be treated in every respect as children of other working classes are. The Act does not extend to Ireland or Scotland.

TEARLESS MADNESS.

ONE of the most curious facts connected with madness is the utter absence of tears amidst the insane, observes the "British Medical Journal." Whatever the form of madness, tears are conspicuous by their absence, as much in the depression of melancholia, or the excitement of mania, as in the utter apathy of dementia. If a patient in a lunatic asylum be discovered in tears, it will be found that it is either a patient commencing to recover, or an emotional out-

break in an epileptic who is scarcely truly insane; while actually insane patients appear to have lost the power of weeping; it is only returning reason which can once more unloose the fountains of their tears. Even when a lunatic is telling one in fervid language how she has been deprived of her children, or the outrages that have been perpetrated on herself, her eye is never even moist. The ready gush of tears which accompanies the plaint of the sane woman contrasts with the dry-eyed appeal of the lunatic.

It would, indeed, seem that tears give relief to feelings which when pent-up lead to madness. It is one of the privileges of reason to be able to weep. Amidst all the misery of the insane, they can find no relief in tears.

FACETIÆ.

ELIGIBLE CHRISTMAS GUESTS.

THE acute individual who can hear the table "groan."

The magistrate who does ample justice to the viands before him."

The forester who always has his "wines from the wood."

The nervous bachelor who will not "propose"—if it's only a toast.

The sea captain whose vessel has a mistletoe bow.

The depressed person who suffers from melancholly.

The host remarkable for mince-piety.

The horticultural bookseller who gets up a show of "annuals" every December.

The "crack shot" who distinguishes himself at "go-bang."

The eccentric naturalist who believes in the existence of snap-dragons.

The geometrician who recommends a round dance after a "square" meal.—Funny Folks.

PROVERBS CONCERNING NOSES.

WE have no fewer than fourteen proverbs relating to this important feature of the human face divine.

They are as follows:

1. Follow your nose.
2. He cannot see beyond his nose.
3. An inch is a good deal on a man's nose.
4. He would bite his own nose off to spite his face.
5. He has a nose of noses.
6. As plain as the nose on your face.
7. To hold one's nose to the grindstone.
8. To lead one by the nose.
9. To put one's nose out of joint.
10. To pay through the nose.
11. To have a good nose for a poor man's sow.
12. To thrust one's nose into other people's business.
13. A nose that can smell a rat.
14. Every man's nose will not make a shoeing horn.

RABBIT IT!

MR. RABBITS has been chosen by the Southwark Liberal "Two Hundred" as one of their candidates for that borough. The Two Hundred seem to have a notion of the "fitness of things," for who can understand more about burrows than rabbits? —Fun.

STONE—"CUTTERS."—Masons on strike. —Funny Folks.

A REAL CATAclysm.—When it rains cats and dogs. —Funny Folks.

MODERN CONVERSATION.

YOUNG GREEN: "Hot, isn't it?"

YOUNG LADY (tired of the subject): "So you said just now."

Y. G. (nervously): "Yes, but don't you think it has got hotter?"

(Young Lady gives Young Green up as a bad job.) —Judy.

"SO VERY YOUNG."

"ALMOST all great generals have been young men." Of course they have—once. Several

got over it in course of time; others sank and died under the infliction. —Fun.

THE HISTORY OF A LIFE.

In five sittings.

(Dedicated to the author of "Lothair.")

A LAWYER'S stool.

An author's library lounge.

A parliamentary seat.

A treasury bench.

A triumphal arch—of Windsor chairs.

—Punch.

MEMS. OF MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS.

MEM. To take more exercise, and not smoke so much.

MEM. Not to dog's-eat my new books, nor wear my new boots down at heel.

MEM. To get up every morning direct, I am called.

MEM. Never, under any provocation, to allow myself "forty winks" after dinner.

MEM. Not to be sulky with my wife when she has lured me into shopping with her.

MEM. Nor to grumble when she drags me out at night to a four-mile off "At Home."

MEM. To join no more new Clubs, and to spend less time and money at my old ones.

MEM. To give up playing cards—at least for more than penny points.

MEM. Not to forget to recollect that we really must invite my dear mamma-in-law to come and stay a month with us.

MEM. Not to waste my precious time so much in reading trashy newspapers and trumpery French novels.

MEM. To cultivate a deeper sense of conscientiousness in regard to the return of borrowed books and silk umbrellas. —Punch.

WHY is green like the Archbishopric of Canterbury?—Because it is the greatest die o' seas (diocese. Hem!)

WHY is a weighty legging like a sailor?—Because it is an heavy gaiter! (a navigator. Hem!)

It was at a provincial concert, about a month ago, when they announced "I cannot sing the old, old songs," a little boy at the back of the hall said, "Then sing us a new 'un!" —Punch.

MANY A TRUE WORD SPOKEN IN JEST.

It is reported that when the Czar met the hero of Plevna and congratulated him on his bravery, the intrepid Osman replied, "Sire, I fight for fatherland." "True," said the Czar, "and I also fight for fatherland." —Judy.

NEW YEAR'S LEAVES.

(That might be "turned over" with advantage.)

ON and after the first—Lord Beaconsfield might abandon the oracular diplomacy of Delphi for plainer English.

Mr. Bright might look rather less to the points of his oratory, and rather more to the accuracy of his data.

Mr. Gladstone might leave the themes proper for the stump to the mountebank who is in place on it, and preserve unimpaired the hard-won dignity of a great name.

Lord Derby might manage to see less than seven distinct sides to every question, and, when occasion requires, might even bring his great mind to a definite statement in black and white.

Mr. Lowe might relinquish his taste for political calisthenics, and try six months as a farm labourer without the franchise.

The Emperor of Russia might give up a military parade or two at St. Petersburg, and try an experiment in "Civilisation without Gunpowder."

Mr. Mackonochie might deny himself a little bit of trimming, a vestment, a mop and a mow, and a flower-pot or two, and inculcate by his practice some of the obedience and respect to authority which he preaches.

Marshal MacMahon might avoid being thrust by his advisers into contemptible situations, accept accomplished facts, and brush up his best cocked-hat for the opening of the coming Exhibition.

The British mason might gather from experience that his employers were not created

solely for his convenience, and, the next time he has a chance of a job, not be fool enough to hand it over to a set of foreigners, because he is too dense to understand a simple sum in Rule-of-Three.

The Turkish Government might give up a hopeless contest with the "logic of events," and set about the more rational business of paying up arrears to the holders of its Foreign Debt, together with a handsome bonus.

The patriotic Alarmist might fall asleep without thinking out a Government plan for the defence of the Isle of Dogs, and define "British Interests" without either referring to Pitt, quoting Palmerston, or using a rhyming dictionary, and

The man who takes a common sense view of it might pay a little less attention to the scares of the hour, and quietly wait the opening of Parliament.

—Punch.

HOW TO BOIL A POTATO.

FIRST procure your potato. Then wash him all over carefully, and well. Then set him up to dry. Then scrape him tenderly with a sharp knife, but be careful not to break his skin. Then get a nice large saucepan. Then make up a nice large fire. Then fill that saucepan half full of tepid water. Then put that saucepan on that fire. Then drop that potato gently into that saucepan. Then cover him up carefully. And then—boil him.

P.S.—You won't easily beat the above.

—Judy.

BEARING GOOD FRUIT.

MRS. LAYARD made the Sultana the other day a present of a shawl, which had been handed to her for the purpose by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts. This is very like sending coals to Newcastle, as if a Sultana has anything in profusion it is shawls. But as our own Franco-Hibernian says, you may give anything to a Sultana, and there is bound to be good raison for it.—Fun.

WHAT is the difference between a person moving sacks of flour in a barrow and an old-fashioned adhesive?—One is wheeling sacks and the other sealing wax.

—Judy.

SOME OTHER THINGS THAT MAY BE EXPECTED THIS YEAR.

THERE will be seven seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter, the London, and two opera seasons.

War will not be concluded, and there will be engagements all over the world.

The price of oysters will not improve, neither will the natives of South Africa.

Chinese masons may probably be employed on the new Law Courts.

The Pure Water Supply will be very limited. Another improved Cab Company will be talked about.

The dog days will be none the shorter, in spite of the unnecessary slaughter which has lately taken place.

There will be no further measure taken of Scotland-yard.

Fashions and ladies' minds will change as before.

But "Judy" will remain the best, the only, the most gorgeous, the most popular, the ever versatile, the most mirth-provoking, and side-splitting of comic papers.

—Judy.

STATISTICS.

A SUCCESSFUL SAVINGS BANK.—The sixty-second annual report of the Liverpool Savings Bank which has just been issued shows that at the close of the financial year £1,735,753 was due to 60,072 depositors. During the year 13,212 new accounts were opened, 3,896 old accounts re-opened, and 12,511 accounts closed. The deposits, including transfers from other savings banks, were £677,235, and £47,403 was added to depositors' accounts for interest. The withdrawals and transfers amounted to £581,719. The bank possesses a surplus of £5,333 over the amounts due to depositors, and in addition

to a separate surplus fund of £10,000, its total funds being upwards of £1,750,000 sterling. The business is a growing one, the amount due to depositors now being about £800,000 more than in 1866. As compared with last year 2,472 more accounts were opened and 2,261 more were closed, while £43,471 more was received and £23,452 paid away, and 27,027 more transactions were made. The amount due to depositors increased by £142,914 in the year. Branches have been opened at the north and east ends of the town, and these have been much appreciated.

LEND A HELPING HAND, MY BROTHER.

LEND a helping hand, brother.

Sister, cheer the saddened one.

Earth is full of sorrow's children,

God has plenty to be done.

He has placed thee here for something.

Some great purpose to be wrought;

See thou dost not lose thy crowning

When rewards cannot be bought.

Kind acts hurt thee very little,

Kind words cost thee even less;

Cups of water gladly given.

God will surely mark and bless.

Earth is strewn with rough, dark

places,

Pitfalls for the young and wild;

Strive to rescue them from danger,

Guide them as a wayward child.

Treading daily life's stern pathway,

Some discouraged ones we meet,

Seeking work to keep off famine,

Up and down the crowded street.

Do not spurn these weary plodders,

Turn not from them in disdain;

Lend a helping hand, good brother,

And their thanks most gladly claim.

Sick ones, too, we find around us,

Fever stricken, hollow-eyed;

Sister, woman's hand can comfort,

Let thy place be by their side.

Then when death has snatched some

neighbour

Leaving vacancy and grief,

To the mourners prove a solace,

To the stricken a relief.

Aged ones need arms to bear them;

Blind ones need kind hands to

guide;

Lame and palsied seek assistance;

Work is ever at our side.

Then, lend helping hands, good people,

Never shirk work God has given;

Weary not, keep on well doing;

Thy reward shall be in Heaven. E. J.

GEMS.

It usually falls out that those who seek others' destruction find their own.

WASTE of wealth is sometimes retrieved; waste of health, seldom; waste of time, never.

A FALSE friend is like a shadow on a dial, it appears in clear weather, but vanishes as soon as it is cloudy.

MONEY in your purse will credit you; wisdom in your head adorn you; but both in your necessity will serve you.

THE vanity of a human life is like a river, constantly passing away, and yet constantly coming on.

BE in peace with many, nevertheless have but one counsellor of a thousand.

CONSIDER how much more you often suffer from your anger and grief, than from those very things for which you are angry and grieved.

OUR notions of life are much the same as they are about travelling—there is a good deal of amusement on the road, but, after all, one wants to be at rest.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

COLDS IN THE HEAD.—Now that this complaint is so very prevalent it would not be unwise to give a few remedies prescribed for it by eminent physicians. Take a wide-mouthed stoppered bottle; fill it with wool or asbestos saturated with a mixture of pure carbolic acid five parts, rectified spirits of wine five parts, strong solution of ammonia six parts, water ten parts, and use as smelling salts. Dr. Farrer, of King's College Hospital, London, recommends the following:—Trisnitrate of bismuth six drachms, acacia powder two drachms, hydrochlorate of morphia two grains. The mixture is used as snuff.

SAGO JELLY.—A teaspoonful of sago, boiled in three pints and a half of water till ready. When cold add half a pint of raspberry syrup. Pour it into a shape which has been rinsed with cold water, and let it stand until it is sufficiently set to turn out well. When dished pour a little cream round it.

BEEF A-LA MODE.—A round of beef is the best for this purpose. With a sharp knife, cut incisions in the meat about an inch apart, and within one inch of the opposite side. Season it with pepper and salt, according to the size of the piece of meat. Make a dressing of butter, onion, and bread-crumbs, in the proportion of a pint of crumbs, one small onion, finely chopped, and an ounce of butter, with pepper and salt to the taste. Fill the incision with the dressing, put the meat in a pot, with about a pint of water, and cover it tightly. Let it simmer for about six or eight hours. Some stick in a few cloves, and those who are fond of spice add all-spice. When the meat is done, dish it up, and thicken the gravy with a little flour. This is excellent when cold.

VEAL CUTLETS.—An excellent way to dress. —Remove every bit of skin, sinew, or vein, from the veal, and chop it very finely, with salt, pepper, and a very little parsley. The mince should now be made into the shape of cutlets; and if you have the proper bones, the effect will be so much the better. The cutlets must now be egged and bread-crumbed twice, fried in boiling butter, and served with sorrel, spinach, green peas, asparagus, or tomatoes. For the egg and bread-crumbing process, the Germans much prefer pounded biscuit to bread-crumbs. It is certainly preferable for this dish, as it "binds" the cutlets better.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SIR STAFFORD NOTTHCOTE recently presided at the celebration of the 213th anniversary of the Scottish Corporation.

POISONING BY EARRINGS.—Two young girls in Paris suffered from ophthalmia, and one of them also from an inflammation of the left auricle. All the usual remedies proved inefficacious, but both patients quickly recovered after their copper earrings were discarded.

It is expected that Indian titles will be conferred on the Queen's daughters in a subordinate degree to that of Empress, and that the new titles and dignities will be officially announced in a few days.

MURDERERS, burglars, pickpockets, swindlers, and the tribe of roughts generally will be sorry to learn that 1,500 additional policemen are to be added to the metropolitan forces. This increase will give us a total of 12,000 men whose duty is supposed to be to see that crimes are not committed, and to take up those who commit crimes, within the metropolitan area.

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.—It is probable that Sheffield will be chosen for the meeting of the British Association in 1879. Nottingham was to have been the place of meeting, but a difficulty has arisen respecting the meeting there, and Sheffield has been unofficially written to. The matter is being warmly taken up by some of the principal townsmen, and there can be no doubt with a successful result.

CONTENTS.

Page.	Page.
SNOWFLAKES' SHADOW - 313	HOUSEHOLD TREASURES - 335
SUNBEAMS' SHINE - 316	CORRESPONDENCE - 336
A CHRISTMAS STORY OF TWO WORLDS - 317	
SCIENCE - 317	
A WOMAN SPURNED - 317	
EFFECTS OF FORGIVENESS - 320	
WHO DID IT; OR, THE WARD'S SECRET - 320	
FOUR OLD MAIDS - 323	
POOR LOO - 323	
THE LOVE PACT - 325	
LEAVING HOME - 327	
THE LORD OF STRATHMERE; OR, THE HIDDEN CRIME - 327	
A GREAT TEMPEST - 329	
PROPOSED DIVERSION OF THE NILE - 329	
CONVICTED - 330	
KING VICTOR EMMA - 332	
MUEL - 332	
FACTS - 334	
STATISTICS - 335	
GENS - 335	
MISCELLANEOUS - 335	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MATHEMATICS.—Judson's Dyes are so cheap and so simple in their application that their popularity is thus readily accounted for. As far as we have been able to discover everyone who has used them has had good reason to be perfectly satisfied with the results, aesthetically and economically.

C. O.—Writing very crabbed.
A. S.—We cannot reply to our correspondent's queries through the post.
"To a Bride" (rhymes, with no signature) utterly unsuitable.

M. E. B.—Under the circumstances the authorities would probably not inflict upon you any greater punishment than a possible reprimand should it be discovered that you had denied having previously been in the army. Having been bought out on the first occasion, your re-enlistment was not an offence, nor need you have wished to attempt concealment in the matter. With regard to the quantity of clothing to which a recruit would be entitled if not sworn in until October 1 as compared with that which would have been given him on September 27 we think you might get information from your comrades or those in command more reliable than we can furnish. If your heart is affected you had better consult one of the medical men attached to your branch of the service.

ACE HORN.—Mix more frequently with society, bashfulness will then gradually disappear, but you need not altogether be ashamed of blushing—it is a sign of fine sensibility, which only foolish people laugh at. If you send, and we receive, your photograph we will of course give our opinion upon it.

C. D.—There was an egg-hatching machine exhibited in London called the Eccelesobion. The mean temperature required for incubation is 100 deg. Fahrenheit—the variation may range from 95 to 105 deg.

G. H. N.—We cannot insert your advertisement about Mesmerism.

CLARIBEL.—Your lover's conduct was certainly strange, but perhaps a satisfactory explanation would have been forthcoming had you desired it before returning letters, &c.

E. W.—We regret being unable to supply our correspondents with sheets of costumes for masquerade ball. Apply to the editor of one of the periodicals which furnish their readers with such illustrations.

PEARL's story is far from being equal to the standard for publication, and we are thus sorry to dismiss our correspondent's interesting appeal.

H. W. B.—Place a sheet of tinfoil on a table or other level surface, and with a hairfoot rub mercury over it till the two metals amalgamate. Then lay down the sheet of glass with weights on it. Two ounces of mercury will suffice for three square feet of glass.

A. H.—For Light Cavalry 5 ft. 6 in. minimum height, least chest measurement 33 in.

POLLY ROSE.—The treatment for neuralgia must be regulated by the supposed cause as far as can be ascertained. As a general rule the nervous system should be braced by tonics. Bathing the head and nape of the neck copiously with cold water and rubbing well afterwards with a towel has often proved effectual. More complicated remedies however should not be employed except under the guidance of a medical man.

JESSIE.—How to ice cakes: Whip the white of five eggs to a froth; add a pound of double refined sugar sifted and three spoonfuls of orange-flower water; beat it up thoroughly and when the cake is taken out ice it with a wooden spatula. Leave it in the mouth of the oven to harden, and do not allow it to contract the least colour. Lemon juice instead of the orange-flower water renders it very white and pleasant to the taste.

BESSIE J.—Writing could be greatly improved by earnest practice from good copies. Thanks for compliments upon our stories, &c.

J. C.—Take a couple of anchovies, pick them clean from the bones and pound them to a paste with some flour. When sufficiently smooth add two and a half ounces of butter and incorporate it with the anchovy paste. Put this mass into a saucepan with nearly a pint of milk or cream and set it over a gentle fire to dissolve, frequently stirring it; when it has simmered a minute or two it will be of the required consistence. Made with the essence of anchovy two tablespoonfuls will be necessary to flavour

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

IN OUR NEXT NUMBER

WILL APPEAR

A NEW SERIAL TALE

BY AN AUTHOR OF GREAT REPUTE.

half a pint of good melted butter. It should be served hot and have the juice of half a lemon squeezed into it.

EXCELSIOR, twenty-five, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony, about twenty.

CLAUDE and **LIONEL** would like to correspond with two young ladies. Claude is nineteen, dark brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking. Lionel is eighteen, good-looking, dark. Respondents must be about seventeen. Both are fond of home.

L. D. and **J. P.**, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. L. D. is twenty, medium height, light hair, hazel eyes, fond of home and music. J. P. is nineteen, blue eyes, fond of home and dancing.

JOSEPHINE and **VIOLET** would like to correspond with two young men.

LUCY and **EMILY**, friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen about twenty. Lucy is eighteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of music and dancing, good-looking. Emily is seventeen, fond of home and music, medium height, dark blue eyes, considered good-looking.

JACKY and **JOHNNY**, two friends, wish to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Jacky is eighteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, tall. Johnny is nineteen, brown hair and eyes, fair, of a loving disposition.

MARIE and **AGNES M.** would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Marie is nineteen, brown hair and eyes, dark. Agnes M. is seventeen, dark hair, brown eyes.

W. J., nineteen, medium height, dark hair, brown eyes, wishes to correspond with a young gentleman. Must be twenty-two, light hair, blue eyes, medium height, and fair.

WERT THOU MINE.

Oh! wert thou mine how I would love thee,
I would cheer thy darkest day,
And like the larks that sing above thee
I would sing the time away.
My breast would cease to have a care
When thy sweet face was ever near,
And joy 'twould be thy griefs to share;
Oh! truly art thou to me dear.

Oh! wert thou mine how I would love thee,
I would cheer thy little heart,
And like the stars that shine above me
I to thee would ever impart.
The love that glows within my breast,
That beams in brightness but for thee—
The love that now disturbs my rest;
Oh! truly art thou dear to me.

Oh! wert thou mine how I would love thee,
I would live thy joys to share,
And all thy griefs I would remove, aye,
With my love and watchful care,
Wreaths of flowers I'd often twine
To make thy home a little bower,
Where Flora's beauties sweet would shine,
And make thy days one happy hour. S. B. N.

ALICE, twenty-two, medium height, fair, thoroughly domesticated, fond of home, would like to exchange carte-de-visite with a gentleman.

TERRY, twenty-four, fair, good-looking, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about twenty, dark, medium height, good-looking, and fond of home.

E. E. and **D. G.** would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. E. E. is nineteen, auburn hair, blue eyes, loving. D. G. is eighteen, dark hair, grey eyes, and tall.

GASTON D., twenty-one, dark hair and eyes, medium height, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen.

J. M., twenty-one, curly hair, blue eyes, tall, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be twenty-two, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

W. P. N., twenty-seven, fond of home, brown hair, hazel eyes, medium height, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Must be twenty-two, medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of dancing.

O. F., twenty-five, medium height, fair, and of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady. Must be about twenty, brown hair and eyes, fair, good-looking.

G. E. and **L. R.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. G. E. is nineteen, tall, light hair, blue eyes. L. R. is twenty, tall, dark hair, good-looking, fond of children.

F. A. and **C. L.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. F. A. is twenty, tall, light brown hair and eyes, fair, fond of home. C. L. is twenty-two, medium height, dark brown hair and eyes, thoroughly domesticated.

HELEN and **MARY**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Helen is nineteen, medium height, dark hair, grey eyes. Mary is seventeen, tall, auburn hair, blue eyes, considered good-looking.

HANBY T., twenty-one, medium height, dark, wishes to correspond with a young lady about twenty, of medium height.

GERTRUDE M., twenty-one, medium height, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a good-looking gentleman.

ROSE, nineteen, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy. Respondent must be about twenty-one, good-looking, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

CARY and **BLANCHE**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Cary is twenty, dark hair and eyes, good-looking. Blanche is eighteen, light brown hair, hazel eyes, fair. Respondents must be about twenty-eight, tall.

POLLY L. W., twenty, tall, brown hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about twenty-four, good-tempered, fond of home and children.

S. C. and **H. L.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. S. C. is twenty, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. H. L. is twenty, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home.

VIOLET and **FLORENCE** would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Violet is twenty, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home. Florence is eighteen, thoroughly domesticated, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-four, tall, dark, and fond of home.

POLLY and **LOUIE**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony, about twenty. Polly is fair. Louie is dark, and rather tall.

LAUNCELOT wishes to correspond with a young lady about seventeen. He is twenty, brown hair, hazel eyes, fair.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

HAMBURG by—is responded to by—Violet G.

ANNE by—Charles O.
S. T. by—Jenny, eighteen, light hair, blue eyes, good-looking.

ALICE by—F. S., twenty, blue eyes.

LESLIE by—T. M., nineteen, blue eyes.
Tom by—Snowdrop, nineteen, good-tempered, fond of home and children.

JOE by—Mahala, twenty, tall, dark, good-tempered, domesticated, fond of children.

M. W. G. by—A. L. P., medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of home, domesticated.

MARY by—M. N. V.

ALL the Back Numbers, Parts, and Volumes of THE LONDON READER are in print, and may be had at the Office, 334, Strand; or will be sent to any part of the United Kingdom Post Free for Three-halfpence, Eightpence, and Five Shillings and Eightpence each.

THE LONDON READER, Post Free, Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

LIFE and **FASHION**, Vols. 1 to 2, Price Seven Shillings and Sixpence each.

EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL, Parts 1 to 4, Price Threepence each.

**** Now Ready, Vol. XXIX. of THE LONDON READER, Price 4s. 6d.**

Also the TITLE and INDEX to Vol. XXIX., Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 177 (Nov.) Now Ready, Price Sixpence. Post Free, Eightpence.

NOW READY, the CHRISTMAS (DOUBLE) PART (Parts 178, 179), containing EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER, with complete Stories, Illustrated. Price One Shilling, by post One Shilling and Fourpence.

N.B.—Correspondents must Address their Letters to the Editor of THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily authors should retain copies.

London: Published for the Proprietors at 334, Strand, W.C. A. SMITH & CO.